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Understanding DIY punk as activism:  
realising DIY ethics through cultural  
production, community and everyday  
negotiations

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N. C. Griffin

PhD

2015

# Understanding DIY punk as activism: realising DIY ethics through cultural production, community and everyday negotiations

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the University of  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the production of DIY punk alternative cultures, communities and identities as activism. Based on an ethnographic study of DIY punk in North East England, it combines and integrates the disciplinary approaches of sociology, cultural studies and geography. Using an interpretivist epistemology, the research focuses on DIY punk participants' subjective realities and experiences, through participant observation, of punk events and shows, and interviews. Carried out by a researcher who was both embedded in the scene, as a punk participant, and outside it, as an academic-PhD student, it enhances methodological and epistemological debates about the 'insider/outsider' research stance and subjectivities.

This thesis promotes DIY punk as a relevant and rich area for scholarship. It theorises DIY punk participation as cultural production (Moore, 2007), existing within a framework of activism, as participants attempt to bring into being 'hoped-for futures' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010) using a multitude of tactics. Identifying multi-layered and multi-scalar acts of resistance, the narrowness of the concept of activism in the literature is critiqued. A more inclusive conceptualisation of activism, as more than oppositional, is proposed.

A DIY ethic is theorised as anti-capitalist and interconnected with other complexly interwoven ideologies and politics. The everyday challenges that participants face, in negotiating a DIY punk ethic, and the interface between DIY punk culture and 'mainstream' society, are examined. Participants narratively construct DIY punk through ongoing negotiations, which affect how participants produce and interact with and in DIY punk spaces.

The research contributes to scholarship on punk and community by arguing that DIY punk cultural production is strengthened by notions of community. It has wider relevance by exploring the meaning of community in a unique cultural context. It offers a definition of community that recognises DIY punk

communities as imagined (Anderson, 1991) but sensitive to the significance of place.

Keywords: DIY, Punk, Cultural Production, Place, Activism, Resistance, Community, Insider Research

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# Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee / University Ethics Committee on 10/05/2012.

I declare that the Word Count of this thesis is: 76,031

Name: Naomi Christina Griffin

Signature:

Date:

# 1.0 Thesis Introduction

This thesis is based on an ethnographic study of DIY punk in the North East of England and combines and integrates the disciplinary approaches of sociology, cultural studies, and geography. It explores the tactics that DIY punk participants employ in attempts to realise DIY ethics through the creation of DIY punk culture. 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) is an ethic and a slogan of encouragement. 'Do It Yourself' is a rallying call for autonomy and creativity, encouraging people to take political and cultural matters into their own hands. DIY encourages involvement in the production of culture. They can do this through, for example, art, crafts, music, and literature, according to alternative criteria that the participants choose. DIY is an inherently anti-capitalist ethic that critiques corporate culture industries, such as the mainstream music industry, refusing to let profit-motivated imperatives and priorities dictate what culture is available and who is able to access cultural opportunities. DIY as an anti-capitalist ethic and movement manifests in many forms and proponents of DIY employ innumerable political and cultural tactics, which this thesis explores.

DIY ethics and punk have a strong historical relationship, though not all punk is necessarily DIY in practice. Motivated by a DIY ethic, DIY punks '*avoid the capitalist, profit-driven music world by promoting their bands, shows, and records themselves or through small companies*' (Haenfler, 2006, p.24). DIY punk is resistant to being defined by one specific sound or genre, instead research on punk often focuses on ties through and beyond the musical style that connect the subculture (Culton & Holtzman, 2010). Because of the diversity of punk, and the recognition that assumptions that punk is implicitly DIY are problematic, my focus in this thesis is contemporary self-identified punk that explicitly purports commitment to a DIY ethic. I focus in this way in the knowledge that drawing clear, uncontested boundaries around specific types of 'punk' is problematic (Furness, 2012).

The attention of this research, to DIY punk in the North East of England, narrows the field of study. Yet, the data illustrates the diverse and interconnected nature of DIY culture and so has relevance beyond the North East. It highlights the complexity of cultural production and the interconnectedness of ethics, identity, community, and activism, which happen through DIY punk in multi-layered and multi-scalar ways. By carrying out my research in the North East, I was able to take advantage of my familiarity, contacts and knowledge as an 'insider' researcher and to contribute to scholarship by studying in a geographical area that is rarely the focus of academic research on DIY and punk.

This thesis interrogates the concept of activism, drawing on literature which critiques its often narrow application, and proposes a more inclusive definition. The definition proposed by this thesis acknowledges the importance of the everyday, recognising the role that actions and negotiations that occur at an everyday level play in social change. DIY punk culture demonstrates activism that is multi-layered and multi-scalar. It also illustrates activism that is more than resistant and oppositional; activism that is productive and creative, incorporating alternative ways of thinking, doing, and being. The DIY punk praxis explored in this research offers evidence of breadth and diversity in what can be understood as activism, while providing an analysis that also supports the concept of activism as useful and meaningful. This thesis proposes that DIY punk participation, ethics and action are best understood within a field of cultural production (Moore, 2007). Furthermore, this study of DIY punk cultural production is framed within activism and it explores the multitude of tactics used to produce DIY punk culture. The DIY punk cultural production explored is resistive but it also aims to produce alternative culture and modes of production, which are not necessarily always oppositional. DIY punk as activism is both cultural and political.

This research recognises the significance of 'community' in a DIY punk context. The research explores shared understandings of the concept of community, which is contested but remains meaningful to the research participants. The

research engages with the concept of 'imagined communities', proposing a definition, through data analysis, which can account for DIY punk's complex geographies of space, place, global connections and local specificities.

## **1.1 Personal Interest**

I have been what may be considered an 'activist' since my childhood. I started with involvement in traditional party politics and formal protest, accompanying my parents. From primary school, I remember being concerned about war, injustice (particularly world poverty) and animal cruelty. As I grew up my ideas and my social conscience developed and personal experiences contributed to my awareness of gender inequality and other social ills, like homophobia, ableism, racism and sexism. In my teens I began to become more personally involved in more 'big A' activism, along with more local, small scale, action. This, along with my degree studies (Human Geography and Education), developed my political identity, and particularly my identity as a feminist, as well as an animal rights activist and a punk. This research has also influenced my relationship with DIY punk culture.

I became interested in punk when I was about 14. After attending a few more corporate punk shows at larger venues, when I was a little older I discovered that regular hardcore punk shows were being held in my small town. These shows were held in a small community venue, and were well attended. The shows would always get really raucous and were intensely exciting for me. Seeing something that seemed so wild and exciting happening in a town that I had always complained about being boring had a huge and long lasting influence on me and my relationship with the town. Since about the age of 17, I have been involved in organising shows.

After years of being involved in putting on shows from a more 'back stage' position (mainly because I was too shy to do any performing, so I would do mostly pre-show organising), I slowly became more confident in my role, and since I started

this research I have joined two bands and been on tours in the UK and in the USA. My engagement with DIY punk culture has given me the opportunity to travel and to form connections and collaborate with people, who similarly identify with DIY punk, from across the UK and several other countries.

Over the years I have witnessed changes and developments in my local punk scene. I have also witnessed (and engaged with) political developments, ideological schisms, and seen the effect a new local band and their politics can have on a local scene (and beyond). I have also experienced the fragility of local punk scenes through music shop and venue closures, and participants moving away, losing interest, and burning out. I did not always perceive my interest and involvement in DIY punk culture as necessarily activist or even, as overtly political. But it has led to my engagement with many political and social justice causes, and has been crucial in the development of my identity. The research has allowed a level of reflexivity, critical engagement and appreciation for DIY punk culture and its role in my life, and in the lives of many people I know, that was not possible before.

## **1.2 Wider context**

It is an interesting and innovative time for activism. In recent years we have seen waves of activist movements where direct action on the street and social media have interacted in novel and significant ways, from the Arab spring to the Occupy movement. The rise of social media's role in activism and direct action promotes a sense of global connectedness of different struggles, seen, for example, in global responses to the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, which led to the exposure of many cases of fatal police brutality that targeted people of colour in the US. The internationally widespread use of the '*black lives matter*' hashtag demonstrated awareness raising and protest on social media sites. We have the example of how people in Palestine used Twitter to connect with people protesting across the USA after the shooting, to offer advice on how to respond to police tactics based on their own experience (Harding et al. 2014). This

included Palestinians warning that victims of police tear gas should use milk to wash their eyes instead of water. The use of social media to offer advice and support reflects an active global linking-up between oppressed people. There is also growing awareness of alternative forms of activism. The example of *Pussy Riot* combined political and cultural activist tactics in a public form of musical, political performance and protest. Members of the Russian feminist punk band were incarcerated after their public demonstrations denouncing President Putin's sexism and homophobia. Global media followed the *Pussy Riot* story through to their release and generated demonstrations of protest through internet petitions that garnered individual signatories across national boundaries, their adoption by Amnesty International as 'prisoners of conscience', to statements of support from internationally recognisable 'mainstream' artists and Western political figures. This exemplified how art and politics interacted powerfully through 'guerrilla performances' as protest. There is also growing academic interest in cultural activism and cultural resistance, exploring new and innovative cultural modes and tactics of social change, at different levels of society (Downes et. al., 2013).

In the UK, it seems we are in a time of political dissonance. In the wake of the economic crash (The Warwick Commission, 2015), this has been characterised by a decreased turnout in recent general elections (Elledge, 2014), a growing public interest in smaller 'alternative' parties (Elledge, 2014), calls for a change in voting system that nevertheless led to a *no* vote in a referendum and the forging of a coalition government, ruling after neither of the two 'major' parties received an overall majority of seats. Such developments reflect political unrest and disillusionment. Amidst the drastic and seemingly ever-growing austerity measures, with cuts to public services and, in particular, cuts to Arts and Culture funding, concerns were raised by a report from a Warwick University research project. The Warwick Commission (2015) assert that recent cuts to the public funding of the arts (for example, local government spending on the Arts has decreased by 19% in the last three years) will lead to a "downward spiral" for the creative and cultural "ecosystem", which will be detrimental to society. The report highlights how austerity measures, which are aimed at tackling the economic



deficit, are directly reducing the accessibility of, and participation in, arts and culture. So, examples of grass-roots organising and people taking the matters of access to the arts and cultural production into their own hands, as apparent in DIY participation, seem particularly pertinent.

There has been recent evidence of an incipient mass media interest in DIY culture and DIY punk in the UK. This could be found, for example, in articles in the Guardian: Andrews (2014), Frazer et al. (2014), Kai (2014), Mumford (2014), and The Guide special issue on DIY culture (2014). It has also been evident in the NME magazine: Pelly (2013), and in Noisey magazine: Knox (2014), Noisey Staff (2014), and Schreurs (2014). These articles describe rising DIY cultural activity, reflect on anti-establishment organising and participants acting creatively and autonomously, and even, in Frazer et al.'s (2014) article, provide advice on how to 'Do It Yourself'. A recent Guardian article, on the rise of queer and feminist DIY music festivals, is entitled '*No jerks, no cops, no oppressive behaviour*', which is a direct quote from Chicago's queer feminist *FED UP Fest*. The quote is used to illustrate DIY cultural producers creating spaces and events for themselves, according to their own needs, desires, and ethics. Certain events have brought DIY and punk into public consciousness and mass media interest, as in the case of *Pussy Riot* discussed above. DIY (and) punk cultures respond to mass cultural and political events (for example, punks across the globe raised awareness and money to try to secure the members of *Pussy Riot*'s release from prison), and media interest has an influence on DIY activity. However, DIY (punk) actions and events have a long standing and continuous history. Also relevant are the ways that mainstream and DIY cultural practices interact in an uncomfortable tension, which offer the opportunity to explore the potential and limitations of anti-corporate, anti-capitalist cultural production (see Chapter 6).

A resurgence in media interest supports calls from punk scholars in the recent collaborative publication, *Punkademics* (Furness, 2012), to develop public knowledge about punk, particularly by those who understand its history and

complexity. Responding to partial public knowledge and limited past research on punk, punk scholars of recent years have called for research that moves beyond tendencies to focus on style over punk cultural and political substance (Clarke et al., 1975; Haenfler, 2004b; Hebdige, 1979; Martin, 2004; Muggleton, 2005), and to overcome a reliance on binary oppositions often used to describe punk, reducing punk's complexity. For example, Furness (2012) gives examples of authentic versus inauthentic punk, resistance versus recuperation and success versus failure. Reductive understandings of punk deny that which makes DIY culture and punk interesting to social researchers, its complexities, nuances and idiosyncrasies. Lessons learned from developments in cultural studies (discussed further in 2.3) suggest that we can better understand DIY punk by acknowledging its multiplicity, in our definitions and in setting its context. Rather than attempting to define what DIY or punk *are*, my own 'insider' research attempts to work *with* DIY and punk's multiplicity, in order to explore what occurs through it, what is possible as a result of it and, in particular, how participants engage with it. Through this in-depth ethnographic research over an eighteen month period, my study illustrates the complexity of DIY punk cultural production, the multiple interwoven everyday activist tactics within it, and the diverse yet interconnected politics that participants associate with it. Responding to critiques and developments in studies on punk, and incorporating geographical and sociological perspectives, this interdisciplinary research contributes to expanding approaches to the study of activism, resistance, cultural production, DIY ethics and punk.

### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

The thesis begins with a review of relevant literature. Gaps and underdevelopments in scholarship are identified in relation to DIY punk cultural production (particularly on punk which is self-identified as 'DIY punk') and critical engagements with punk community. It acknowledges complexity and diversity and the implausibility of adequate definitions of DIY, punk and DIY punk and investigates ways to study such phenomena, while acknowledging their diversity.

Initially, DIY culture and cultural activism are theorised. The narrowness of the concept of activism in the literature is critiqued (Chatterton 2006; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Downes 2008; Horton & Kraftl, 2009; Martin et al. 2007; Maxey 1999; 2004). Alternative understandings of power, resistance and activism are theorised and a fairer, more inclusive, application of the concept is proposed, which the research engages with through the findings. The research draws on Foucault's (1978; 1980) assertion that points of resistance can be found wherever there is power. Foucauldian thought highlights the ways in which resistance occurs in the actions and choices made by individuals, in small private spaces as well as in large scale public arenas. Multi-layered and multi-scalar acts of resistance are therefore explored. Connections are then made between DIY ethics, praxis and culture and a broader understanding of activism, which recognises activism at multiple scales. It proposes that 'activism' can unify the plethora of actions, attitudes and behaviours that occur through DIY, as it can describe the productive, the creative, the alternative, the political and the cultural as well as the resistant aspects of the DIY ethic in practice. This discussion situates the following debates on DIY punk more specifically.

DIY punk is traditionally organised in opposition to the mainstream capitalist music industry, organised around anti-capitalist modes of production, distribution and performance (Dale, 2008; Haenfler, 2006; Moore & Roberts, 2009). Literature has addressed that punk participants generally reject negative aspects of 'mainstream' culture, most notably challenging capitalism but also systems of oppression in dominant culture, which may include class systems, capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and, less often but still prominent, speciesism, have also been noted (Griffin, 2012; Haenfler, 2006).

The literature review explores developments in subcultural studies. Such developments reflect the need for research on DIY punk which is grounded in ethnography and focuses on participant subjectivities. The literature review also highlights inconsistencies in DIY punk politics and practice, for example showing

how DIY punk culture may provide spaces for the expression of marginalised identities, but can also allow the potential for the reproduction of oppressive systems.

Finally, the literature review engages with the concept of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991), as community is a concept of importance to participants. It proposes that the concept could be utilised to illustrate the collectivity and connectedness of DIY punk practices and identities. It does so while also addressing concerns about a tendency in punk scholarship to over-state the international homogeneity of punk culture, by recognising the importance of place in DIY punk cultural production and participation.

From the literature review I identify the following research question and sub-questions,

To what extent can attempts to realise DIY ethics through DIY punk participation be understood as activism, and what tactics are employed by participants in the creation of DIY punk culture?

Sub-questions:

1. How do DIY punks define, express and negotiate DIY ethics?
2. What does community mean in a DIY punk context and what role do community, networks and relationships play in DIY punk cultural production?
3. How do participants negotiate the problematics that they encounter in their cultural production and what do these negotiations tell us about the potentialities of DIY cultural production as activism?

In the third chapter I explain how I translated the research questions into a research design appropriate to the study of DIY punk cultural production, and I elaborate on methodological and epistemological issues. From lessons learned in the literature review and from engaging with methodological literature, I explain how a small scale, in-depth ethnographic interpretivist approach, with a focus on

participant subjectivities, was most appropriate to the study of DIY punk. The chapter explains access and sampling and the methods used, which were participant observation, of punk events and (over thirty five) shows, and semi-structured interviews with DIY participants (ten in total). In this chapter, I explain the benefits of my position as an 'insider' and explore some of the pitfalls of 'insider' research, as well as engaging with literature that critiques the 'insider' researcher position.

My findings and analysis are presented in the following three chapters. These three chapters broadly address each of the research sub-questions, in order to answer the over-arching research questions, but themes identified throughout analysis contribute to answering each question. These themes are synthesised in the final chapter. The first analysis chapter addresses how participants define DIY, DIY ethics and how they translate those ethics into practice. A DIY ethic is proposed that encourages autonomy and creativity and is foremost anti-capitalist but is tied to many political belief systems and ideologies. There are implicit expectations about inclusivity, and the rejection of oppressive practices, as DIY (and punk) politics are interconnected with a multitude of political and social movements. The second analysis chapter engages with 'community' as a strong theme in data collection. The chapter explores the role that a sense of community and belonging play in DIY punk cultural production. From the data, I propose a definition of imagined community appropriate to DIY punk collectivity. This research explores the benefits of the concept of imagined community, in condensing and explaining the complexity of DIY punk cultural production and participation, acknowledging the significance of 'community' to DIY punk participants (see 5.2).

The final analysis chapter engages with everyday problematics that participants face in their attempts to produce punk culture in accordance with a DIY ethic. The chapter particularly engages with the difficult and uncomfortable negotiations with and within capitalism and capitalist practices, concerns about exclusivity,

inaccessibility, privilege and oppressive practices, and tactics for engaging with problematics to produce DIY punk culture. It explores participants' emphasis on inclusivity, where they respond to people marginalised even within DIY punk spaces, by attempts to make events as accessible and open to everyone as possible, with varying degrees of commitment and success. Participants negotiate ethics and opportunities at different scales and in different ways, illustrating the complexity of implementing abstract ethics in practice.

Then the concluding chapter synthesises all of the findings, highlights the theoretical implications of the thesis, and gives suggestions for future research developments in the area. This thesis demonstrates that DIY punk is a relevant and rich area for scholarship, particularly scholarship which engages with activism, resistance, community and cultural production. It has wider relevance by utilising geographical perspectives particularly. This thesis sheds a unique light on DIY punk and the cultural production that occurs through it, by emphasising the everyday, place, space and incorporating the concept of imagined communities.

## 2.0 Literature Review

This project aims to develop deeper understanding of DIY as an ethic, an ideology and a catalyst for the production of alternative cultures, and the role this ethic plays in DIY punk. Though 'punk' has been given academic attention, particularly within cultural and subcultural studies, there remains limited academic engagement with punk that is overtly DIY, which is the particular manifestation of punk at this project's focus. To understand the specificities of DIY punk, it is necessary to first explain what is meant by 'DIY', to identify what makes DIY distinct from other forms of punk, other cultural and subcultural movements, and from wider society and culture, and to discuss how DIY ethics are performed through punk. My search of the literature found limited publications (particularly peer reviewed publications) that aim to explain what DIY is, beyond a simple definition of DIY as an anti-capitalist ethic, even within the context of research on punk. While the influence of a DIY ethic has been noted, the meaning of DIY has been under-theorised in academic literature, with limited scholarly engagement with the concept of DIY specifically and its meaning to participants. This project aims to develop understanding of DIY, by exploring its meaning while acknowledging its multiplicity.

This chapter also considers what DIY can tell us about the complexity of activism and resistance and how DIY activism illustrates the complex negotiations that individuals grapple with, when trying to follow an ideology. It develops discussions about DIY activism and resistance as multi-layered and every-day, punk as complex in its relationship with DIY ethics and politics, and about how academics can best study punk, drawing from developments in subcultural studies. I first review literature on 'activism', which attempts to assess how activism is and could be defined, as a complex and discursively produced concept. The literature demonstrates a bias in what is considered activism, which is reflected in research and reporting. Hegemonic notions of politics and resistance are illustrated, which privilege grandiose actions that happen in the public sphere. Though this bias

may be understandable, as Horton et al. (2009) explain, this section reviews the work of authors who have sought to develop a broad and inclusive definition of activism (in terms of scale and action). I then relate this debate to a feminist framework, as it supports the feminist 'project' of expanding what counts as politics (Cope, 2004).

This chapter begins by addressing literature which has discussed the meaning and significance of DIY as an ethic, a movement and a mechanism. I then draw on the work of Foucault, who theorised the complex relationship between power and resistance. Foucault offers useful analytical tools that I utilise in my own project; his work recognises the multitude of sites at which resistance occurs and the complexity of how power is exercised in society. A Foucauldian analysis of the complexity of power and resistance helps develop an appropriate framework for the study of DIY punk activism, as there is a tendency in academic literature on punk to either assume punk is wholly resistant, or to disregard punk as resistance altogether (Nicholas, 2005). I therefore summarise the first section (2.1) with a synthesis of DIY tactics and activism in the light of a Foucauldian analysis of power and resistance. I problematise and deconstruct narrow definitions of activism. I propose that understanding DIY punk participation as cultural production (2.3.1), existing within a broader definition of activism (2.1.2), is appropriate to frame participation that is multi-scalar, multi-layered, and more than resistant and oppositional.

I then further contextualise this study and identify research themes by illustrating DIY punk's relationship with DIY ethics and culture. I consider contemporary debates about DIY punk, arising from punk's complex yet strong relationship with DIY, since at least the 1970s. This section aims to theorise this relationship and to provide the context of DIY punk in the UK (the North East, more specifically). The discussion includes engagement with the principles of DIY punk, lessons learned from cultural studies in how to conceptualise subcultures (not as homogenous, self-contained groups), the merits of understanding DIY punk as an 'imagined community', and the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1993) concept of



‘cultural production’ , when theorising the field of punk (see also Moore 2007). I identify gaps in the literature, which illustrate the need to develop an understanding of DIY punk that recognises its complexity, fluidity and diversity, while also cementing its strong meaning to participants, and the role that DIY ethics play in encouraging participants in prefigurative cultural production. Research themes are identified throughout the chapter and I conclude by identifying research questions, which structure my methodological approach and analysis. The key themes in the chapter are the implementation and negotiation of the DIY ethic, everyday resistances, community, and the importance of place in DIY punk.

## 2.1 Theorising ‘Do It Yourself’ Activisms

This section reviews literature that has attempted to define or deepen understanding of DIY, illustrating the culture and activisms that surround a DIY ethic, to contextualise the manifestations of punk studied in this research. ‘Do It Yourself’ is a slogan of encouragement, intended to inspire participation in culture, art and politics that may otherwise seem unachievable or unobtainable. Broader than a slogan though, DIY is regarded as an ethic that encourages autonomy and creativity (Chatterton, 2006; Chatterton & Pickerill; 2010; Beaver, 2012; Downes, 2012; Moran, 2010; Trapeze-Collective, 2007). Authors have also described a DIY movement or movements (McKay 1998; Trapeze-Collective 2007; Spencer 2008), as well as discussing ‘DIY’ as a culture, cultures, or a counter-culture (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006; McKay, 1998; Purdue et al. 1997). Spencer’s (2008, p.11) book on the rise of DIY culture defines DIY as a movement and as an alternative to ‘mainstream’ culture, which also encourages creativity and autonomy, *‘the DIY movement is about using anything you can get your hands on to shape your own cultural entity; your own version of whatever you think is missing in mainstream culture’*. Similarly, Purdue et al. (1997), through their research on environmental and anti-capitalist organising, define DIY as a *‘self-proclaimed’* movement, but acknowledge that this is narrowing what DIY is, as there is a broader ‘DIY culture’. Moore and Roberts (2009) contribute by

describing DIY as more than an ethic; they describe the DIY ethic as a mechanism for mobilisation and participation (in relation to punk subcultures and how they are sustained). These different aspects of 'DIY' are not in opposition, and may all be possible, but there is limited synthesising of this literature in order to develop a conceptual understanding of DIY (Downes et al., 2013).

The 'yourself' in DIY describes both individual and collective adherence to DIY ethics and 'It' can refer to a multitude of actions (see 2.1.2 and 2.2.1). DIY's encouragement of collectivity is illustrated by Beaver's (2012) study, which concludes that the DIY ethic of the recent roller derby revival supports working collectively and creatively. Brown and Pickerill (2009) found collectivity to be key to autonomous activism (like DIY organising), and that collective support is vital to the emotional well-being of activists and the sustenance of activist performance. DIY culture became recognised as a movement in the 1990s in the UK, made famous by direct action and free party culture (McKay, 1998; Purdue et al., 1997). 'DIY' as a movement is a loose and unfixed one. According to the Trapeze Collective's<sup>1</sup> (2007, p.xii) 'Do It Yourself' handbook, DIY is

*a broad term referring to a range of grassroots political activism with a commitment to an economy of mutual aid, co-operation, non-commodification of art, appropriation of digital and communication technologies.*

Understanding DIY as a movement has given weight to, and recognition of, a history of everyday actions, which have an impact beyond the individuals' lives to their communities, to society and beyond. Thus, a DIY ethic encourages people to think about their position and place in the world, and how their actions (or in-actions) are connected to others, to wider society. Such approaches are not new, but encourage the revolutions of the everyday, emphasising the potential benefits of these changes to individual lives, as well as society and even the world as a whole (Chatterton, 2006; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Trapeze-Collective, 2007). McKay (1998) helps to illustrate this by developing a history of DIY culture, which

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<sup>1</sup> The Trapeze Collective is Alice Cutler, Kim Bryan and Paul Chatterton

connects contemporary DIY culture (at the time that the book was written) to earlier movements, such as the punk and rave cultures of previous generations. He traces the roots of more recent manifestations of DIY culture to longer-standing traditions. McKay (1998) also endeavours to explain how older 'revolutionaries' are connected to, or have influenced, the radical politics that have followed. Though the history of the DIY ethic may stretch further and wider than the examples provided in their book, the Trapeze Collective (2007, p.1) provide evidence of the kinds of everyday actions that can be characteristic of a DIY ethic,

*These everyday actions come from the growing desire to do it ourselves – plant vegetables, organise a community day to get people involved in improving where we live, expose exploitative firms, take responsibility for our health, make cups of tea in a social centre, figure out how to install a shower powered by the sun, make a banner, support strikers, pull a prank to make someone laugh, as well as think.*

Commentators disagree on the progression of the movement. McKay (1998) suggested that DIY culture in the UK had lost ambition since its early roots in, and engagement with, global counter-cultural concerns and campaigns, such as Greenpeace. He perceives a move towards a more local focus. He explains this through what he understands as fear of the 'foreign', and warns of the risk that locally focused action can lead to a politics that is too inward facing and disconnected. Yet, research since (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Dale, 2008; Downes, 2008; 2010; 2012; Downes et. al, 2013; Gordon, 2005; Pickerill, 2008;) has highlighted the continued presence of DIY culture in the UK. McKay's challenge suggests that the roots of the promotion of the 'local' cannot be traced to global and wider ecological concerns and aims, while geographers Chatterton and Pickerill (2010), describe the possibilities of a movement that is not just local but is also not quite transnational either (see later in this chapter on the interwoven multi-scalarity of DIY punk cultural activism more specifically). It is possible to create social change at the everyday, local level which incorporates elements of different movements and connects to wider ideologies, structures and social change. The fluidity of the boundaries of DIY culture and ethics, and the diffuseness of the movement, are evidenced by disparities in its

conceptualisation.

Connections have been identified between DIY and anarchist politics (Dale, 2008; McKay, 1998; Trapeze Collective, 2007). A DIY ethic is anti-capitalist and generally anti- 'the man', which, depending on context, could include the state, authorities, and corporations (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Dale, 2008). In discussing the DIY ethics of punk and independent record labels, Dale (2008) draws parallels between tensions and apparent inconsistencies within the punk movement (for example the on-going debates about how 'DIY' should punk be) and the tensions and contradictions associated with anarchist politics. Besides the links between anarchism, anti-capitalism and DIY politics, the DIY movement has been influenced by a variety of movements such as feminism, Marxism, socialism, autonomism, and ecology, among others (Trapeze Collective, 2007). It is these connections with many different movements, without being tied closely to or dominated by one, that, the Trapeze Collective (2007, p.7) identify, describing diverse influences as '*rich veins of thought*' running through DIY culture, which they argue are a source of strength. These 'rich veins' have been under-theorised and so are investigated in the context of this study (see 4.3.2). Thus, a rejection and critique of state and capitalism is fundamental to the DIY ethic, but there is more to DIY than anti-capitalist politics. This thesis engages with the interconnectedness of DIY politics and action to contribute to the limited academic literature, which tackles the ethics that produce a diffuse, yet powerful, movement.

As the DIY ethic is implemented through a multitude of tactics and inter-connected contexts, in the following section I use the work of Michel Foucault on power and resistance, to situate my research on DIY cultural participation as activist, but in complex and multi-scalar and multi-layered ways.

### **2.1.1 Borrowing from Foucault's toolbox: power and resistance, scale and**

## place

*All my books ... are little tool boxes ... if people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged ... so much better!*

(Foucault, 1975, cited in Patton 1979, p.115)

In light of the limited in depth conceptualisation of DIY and its resistances, I turn to the work of Michel Foucault, who illustrated the complexity and interwoven nature of power and resistance as multi-scaled phenomena. Foucault remains a theorist of interest, in sociology and geography, as his explanation of power continues to provide useful analytical frameworks for research addressing power dynamics and relations in modern societies (Power, 2011; Schlosser, 2008). Here, I discuss how Foucault's framing of power can be helpful in analysing power and resistance at different scales.

Foucault (1978; 1980; 1998) offers critical insight into the multi-directional nature of power. Power does not flow one-directionally from a centralised source, there can be bottom-up and well as top-down power relations. Downes (2008, para.5) draws on this analysis of power within society, to highlight that '*Power is no longer assumed to emanate from an identifiable dominant group, but is diffused throughout society in complex and subtle ways.*' Foucauldian thought contests the 'juridico-discursive' model of power, challenging assumptions that to study power we need only look at how centralised (state or structural) power is possessed and exerted in a top down manner. The 'juridico-discursive' model is criticised for not reflecting the multitude of power forms that also exist (Sawicki, 1991). Instead, Foucault conceptualised relations of power as less bounded or fixed (Manias & Street, 2000), discussing power in much more fluid and complex terms. A Foucauldian perspective thus provides opportunities for the study of the dynamics of power on a local scale, as well as tools for analysis, by revealing that power is multi-scalar, mobile and non-linear (Ettlinger, 2011). Power exists at the micro-level of society, is multi-directional and circulatory (Manias & Street, 2000). Power is exerted in intimate relationships, as well as through the relationship

between the individual and the state, in private homes as well as in government buildings.

A critique of Foucault's framing of resistance, particularly in his later work, concerns its open-ended nature. He declined to propose any limits to his notion of resistance, suggesting the potential for all forms of opposition to be seen as resistance '*without regard for their form or consequence*' (Pickett 1996, p.445). As the notion of resistance remains broad, Hartsock (1990) argues that the potential for actual social change is limited in Foucault's analysis of power. For Hartstock (1990), it is too abstract and therefore not based on fundamental values and consistent standards, making it difficult to see the potential for social change within a system that constantly constructs and restricts subjects. Still, whether or not the breadth and fluidity of Foucault's analysis is a weakness is contestable. Foucault does not theorise that change is impossible. Instead Foucault highlights the complexity of power relations, revealing that power occurs at many different scales, that subjects are produced by power and that this needs to be considered when thinking about resistance. It is also possible to find hope and opportunity in the fluidity of Foucault's understanding. If, as he suggests, society is characterised by disciplinary power that is multi-dimensional and multi-scalar (Ettlinger, 2011), then we can expect resistance and social change to be diverse and complex, and to manifest in many forms.

To agree with Foucault does not mean to believe that resistance is impossible, but rather that the relationship between resistance and power is complex and social change may require more than opposition to the actions of the state. The circulatory and constantly fluctuating nature of power and knowledge, in a Foucauldian analysis may offer the potential for its alteration. Another optimistic view of the potential for resistance in 'disciplinary' society is identified by Fahs (2011, p.463), who suggests that there are many points at which resistance can occur and that opportunities to resist are available at any point where power is enforced: '*Like all social norms, the moment one is forced to comply, a sea of*

*resistances spring up*'. As Foucault (1978, p.95-96) expressed '*Where there is power, there is resistance*'.

Further, for Foucault, power is exercised rather than possessed (Foucault, 1970; 1975). Understanding power as exercised enables, or rather encourages, engagement with the significance of context (including scale) and the 'micro-practices' of power and resistance (Manias & Street, 2000). Schlosser (2008) explains how research, focused on power at the micro-scale, has developed our understanding of the relationship between more 'traditional' power (for example of the state or sovereign) and the everyday lived experiences of people. The benefit of a geographical approach, when considering Foucault and power, is geography's attention to scale. Foucault clarifies how scale-sensitive analysis can reveal how power is mobilised and targeted through techniques of 'bio-power'<sup>2</sup> and 'disciplinary power' (Ettlinger, 2011, p.537). It can also identify diffuse sources of power, while showing how actors' practices can be released from societal constraints.

Referring to Foucault's conception of power facilitates an engagement with theories of resistance as occurring at different levels of society, in complex ways. Foucault's theorising of multi-scalar power is very relevant to a project concerned with cultural production and resistance, as he emphasised the importance of acknowledging the 'micro-politics' of everyday life, using examples of medicine and prisons to illustrate this theory (Foucault, 1970; 1975). This is particularly useful when '*examining the local power relations of individuals' social and cultural practices*' (Manias & Street, 2000, p.56).

Foucault's attention to bio-power and disciplinary power illustrate power and

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault historically traced a shift in the 'dominant mode of power' (Schlosser, 2008, p.1624) that began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, tracing a change from a focus on sovereign territorial control, to the governance of people. This shift describes a move in modern societies towards technologies of managing populations within a territory.

resistance as multi-scalar. Bio-power conceptualises the effects of a shift in the way power operates in human societies, with an emphasis on the control of bodies within populations; bio-power is power held over others' bodies, from the dominance of medicine to prisons (Schlosser, 2008). For Hardt and Negri (2000, p.23) *'Bio-power is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior'*, meaning that power has greatest impact when it is accepted as part of the everyday lives of people (or a population), that is when it becomes socially internalised and individuals accept and embrace it, and re-articulate it (Hardt & Negri, 2000)<sup>3</sup>.

Power and resistance are intrinsically linked in complex ways. *'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power'* (Foucault 1978, p.95-96). Furthermore, within networks of power, resistance is always present (Foucault 1978, 1980; Manias & Street, 2000). As Foucauldian work has illustrated, power is multi-dimensional and multi-directional. Illustrating the discursive and multi-scalar nature of power opens up possibilities for the study and analysis of power, theoretically and spatially. Foucault's (1978) assertion, that points of resistance can be found wherever there is power, can be used to highlight the ways in which resistance occurs in the actions and choices made by individuals, in small private spaces as well as in large scale public arenas. It is thus pertinent to DIY, as a diverse movement that manifests in many ways at multiple scales and places. Haenfler's (2004b) work shows that punk resistance is useful in expressing the complexity and multi-layered nature of resistance. His research, in the USA, exemplifies this through straight edge subcultural participation (where this

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault's concept of bio-power (and bio-politics) can be used to frame analyses of, and to better understand, modern forms of politics, with bio-politics sitting within the broader scope of bio-power, along with disciplinary power (Schlosser, 2008). These forms of power and politics are not clearly distinct and there are overlaps between them, but generally bio-politics is associated with the governance and surveillance of a population, which occurs at many levels. Whereas 'disciplinary power' (inclusive of 'anatomo-politics' or body politics) tends to be considered when discussing the relationship between individuals and a particular expression of power, power contributes to the production of and behaviour of subjects in modern societies, *'Disciplinary and bio-political power... the former is a more direct domination exerted over human subjects while the latter is about producing subjectivities (what Foucault calls 'techniques of the self') from within a broader field of power'* (Schlosser 2008, p.1623).



research does so in the context of DIY punk), as a multitude of tactics at different scales are utilised in the production of alternative punk cultures.

A Foucauldian analysis of power and resistance, as multi-scalar and complexly omnipresent, is consistent with literature that aims to problematise narrow definitions of activism that privilege some forms of resistance and opposition over others. DIY ethics are complex and implemented through a multitude of tactics, so a broad and inclusive understanding of activism is needed, to frame DIY activism and to analyse DIY punk resistance appropriately (2.2 and 2.3).

### **2.1.2 Critiquing 'big A' Activism and the importance of everyday action in DIY ethics and practice**

Continuing the Foucauldian analysis of power and resistance, I now discuss debates around the notion of activism to understand the DIY movement and how the ethic is practised. DIY as an anti-capitalist ethic and movement manifests in many forms and proponents of DIY employ innumerable political and cultural tactics. Resistance comes in many forms, and we encounter difficulty when we attempt to pinpoint what counts as activism, as we stumble on the hurdles of intent and impact. I therefore draw from literature that problematises the notion of 'activism' to broaden our understanding of it. This section promotes a more inclusive conceptualisation of activism as appropriate for the study of DIY and, in turn, suggests how the diversity of DIY praxis helps to broaden our understanding of activism. I conclude by acknowledging activism as a concept that is contentious but useful, for framing DIY praxis.

Within feminist academia and activism there has been debate concerning a dichotomy between 'cultural' activism, versus 'political' activism (Aune & Redfern, 2010; Downes, 2008; Staggenborg, 2001; Taylor & Rupp, 1998). For Staggenborg (2001, p.507), in the context of feminist activism, cultural activism *'is concerned with building internal community and changing individuals rather than political and social institutions'*. Cultural activism can and does exist in a

variety of scales and contexts that sit outside of the traditional 'political' arena (including internet blogs, music venues, classrooms, church halls, high streets). In this model, cultural activism is distinct from the more traditional 'political' feminist activism, which primarily exists within, or targets, formal political structures and systems, using more traditional tactics, such as direct action, petitions and lobbying. Cope (2004) promotes the feminist 'project' of expanding what counts as politics, shedding light on the significance of the different scales, and contexts of political actions. Significant activist tactics are undervalued, warns Downes (2008), such as those seen throughout the history of the women's movement, if only certain forms of activism are acknowledged. The theory of 'abeyance' has been developed and used to explain the role and significance of cultural activism in sustaining movements, in periods of little external threat or mobilization (Staggenborg, 2001; Taylor & Rupp, 1998). Though I use the term 'cultural activism' in discussing DIY, I do not use the term in opposition to 'political' activism, as such a distinction implies that cultural activism is not political (Downes, 2008; Staggenborg, 2001; Taylor & Rupp, 1998). Aune and Redfern's (2011) study of feminist activism across the UK found that cultural activism is not necessarily opposing or confrontational, but can be about building new ideas and ways of thinking, an analysis useful for the study of DIY and its multitude of manifestations and tactics (see 2.3.1 for discussion about the benefits of framing DIY punk participation as 'cultural production' in overcoming debates within subcultural studies about punk resistances). Thus, processes of DIY punk cultural production can be situated within a broader definition of activism.

DIY as an ethic and a movement is complex. DIY ethics are applied in a variety of cultural and politically resistant and productive ways. DIY then helps to illustrate the complexity of resistance and the need for a broader understanding of activism and resistance, to facilitate the study of DIY as a social phenomenon and its impact. Thus, Downes (2008, para. 5) utilises a Foucauldian notion of power to illustrate the complexity of activism and resistance as occurring at different levels of society,

*...if articulations of power are threaded throughout our individual and collective experiences... it follows that the tactics and targets of resistance*

*and protest will need to engage with these interwoven contexts*

The tendency, in social research on activism, to focus the more traditional, public, large-scale, state-focused and grandiose forms of activism, has been noted by several authors (Chatterton, 2006; Downes, 2008; Horton & Kraftl, 2009; Martin et al., 2007; Maxey, 1999; 2004), thus limiting what 'counts' as activism, either explicitly in definition, or implicitly through a lack of definition. For Downes (2008, para. 1); *'the contentious politics approach within social movement studies ... tends to privilege social movement strategies that are public, national, and state-focused.'* Thus, the activism of the everyday and the private is undervalued. Jordan's (2002, p.8) depiction conjures a common image of activism, as necessarily collective, public and generally large scale: *'The scenes are familiar. Crowds of people are waving placards, chanting, taking over streets normally dominated by cars.'* The impact of these actions often has little to do with the cause itself but rather the reaction it provokes. For example, Jordan (2002, p.9) explains that *'the real significance of activism rarely grips us; instead, the immediacy, drama and humour of protest cause us to focus on the meaning of particular movement and their demands'*. Jordan does not disregard other forms of activism but, in emphasising 'political activism' as primarily direct action and protest, highlights the absence of a discussion about what features 'activisms' have in common, what is fundamental to the definition, what connects the examples given and why others are not included. A general focus on the 'grandiose' (Horton & Kraftl, 2009) is problematic when it implies that social change only occurs in certain contexts, as a result of certain actions by certain individuals.

Literature on activism has been challenged for not critically engaging with what 'activism' does and could mean, relying on implicit definitions (Martin et al., 2007; Maxey, 1999; 2004). The general focus on public protests, and other forms of organised direct action, is attributed, by Maxey (1999; 2004), to a bias in what is counted as activism in the media and other popular discourses. Biased representation risks reinforcing common conceptualisations of activism in narrow

terms through implicit understandings, which obscure the visibility of many examples of activism that happen in a variety of scales and contexts (Downes, 2008; Maxey, 1999; 2004). Hence, work on political engagement and activism is criticised by Manning (2010, p.11) for relying on narrow '*orthodox hegemonic notions of politics*', which privilege institutional and party politics and have led to unjustified assumptions about political apathy amongst young people. For Harris et al. (2010), youth engagement in politics has altered, documented by the growing literature on more unconventional forms of action (such as subcultural participation), yet there remain many young people who are not engaged in formal politics, nor involved in more unconventional cultural activism. Still, Harris et al. (2010, p.9) found that young people in Australia, potentially positioned between these two forms of activism, may be politically disenchanted but still show a commitment to social and political concerns, through '*informal, individualized and everyday activities*'.

When considering DIY cultural critiques of capitalism and the pervasiveness of capitalism, and capitalism's entrenchment in society and the social order, the everyday is fundamental, particularly from a geographical perspective. As capitalism is produced and reproduced at all levels in society, it can also be challenged at the level of the everyday. Thompson's (2012) critique of globalised capitalist society is useful here, in contextualising opportunities for activism. Thompson (2012) argues that capitalism deliberately limits opportunities to oppose it. People are forced to negotiate the dilemmas of capitalism at the local and individual scale through 'micro-ethics', predominantly through 'consumer activism',

*....globalized capitalism denies many of us the social coordinates, or handholds, that are necessary if we are to feel that we can act meaningfully within the Symbolic Order* (Thompson 2012, p.895)

In a capitalist society, then, it is difficult to live in a wholly anti-capitalist way, hence Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) contextualisation of anti-capitalist action as existing against, within, and after capitalism,

*Being simultaneously against, within and after capitalism means that the everyday becomes the terrain where our politics are fought for and worked*

*at.’... ‘Just as capitalist social relations are reproduced at an everyday level, so too ordinary everyday practices can be generative of anti- and post-capitalisms. (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010, p.488)*

Recognising the desire for action on the everyday, transformations of the everyday, and the limitations of opportunity for social change, illustrates the necessity to develop a more complex understanding of activism that can account for the small-scale. I propose that the study of DIY praxis must acknowledge the multi-layered nature of power and resistance and the significance of the everyday, to do justice to DIY as a diverse movement.

A discussion about how we see signs of social change in our everyday lives introduces Jordan’s (2002, p.9) book on ‘Activism!’; *‘the future, which we normally expect to arrive grandly, also arrives in such small moments as these: changes in supermarket shelves, the diversification in production of eggs...’* Yet, the author identifies these everyday changes as the outcome of activism, rather than factors in the process of social change. To illustrate where these changes occur, Jordan (2002, p.9) argues that the place *‘where we will find answers... is also familiar, though not so much a part of our daily lives as choosing eggs’*. This implies that social change occurs at a greater scale than the everyday and individual. Jordan recognises the significance of everyday actions and choices, yet positions these as outcomes of activism, rather than activist in themselves. In contrast, Chatterton’s (2006, p.270) work advocates the adoption of a broad and inclusive definition that can consider as activism *‘collectively challenging social relations in our daily lives, which we all continually help to reproduce’*. The common activist and non-activist divide is challenged and attention is drawn to the large grey area in between (Chatterton, 2006). It is important to recognise the significance of local smaller scale actions focused on the place in which they occur, rather than only local activism that has wider effects. Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) argue that academia has a tendency to discuss local, place-specific action, into the context of wider societal battles, through what they refer to as ‘scale-jumping’,

*Scaling up and scale-jumping is as much about the desires of progressive intellectuals to find evidence of a heroic local ‘David’ who will resist and take on the neoliberal Goliath rather than actually understanding the messy particularities of activist place projects.’ (Chatterton & Pickerill,*

2010, p.486).

The recognition of local concerns and aims is fundamental to my study of a DIY punk scene, because participation, scene construction and identity are influenced by locality and place (See 2.3.3 and 5.3.2). Defining activism requires consideration of scale, as it may not be the definitions that obscure understanding of activism but the assumptions about scale that often follow. Martin et al. (2007, p.78) offer a definition of activism that illustrates activism as '*Some person or group recognizes a problem (at what scale?) and takes some action(s) to address it (at what scale?) in order to create change (at what scale?)*.' They maintain that the questions about scale they raise are answered implicitly in the way that activism is discussed (in the academy, the media, and activist groups). They suggest there is a need to pull apart these assumptions, to avoid the exclusion of many important forms of resistance, particularly everyday activism.

The body, for example, is a site where politics, power and resistance intersect. So activism can occur at the level of the body, through corporeal action and resistance. For Lefebvre (cited in Stewart, 1995), to look at resistance we need to start at the body. Pitts (2003) emphasises the importance of the body in women's activism and in understanding why women 'act'. She discusses attempts to reclaim agency and the body through body modification. For Pitts (2003, p.10), women react to experiences of feeling a lack of control over their bodies, particularly with relation to '*sexuality, health and bodily safety*'. Colls (2010) contributes to this discussion, exploring size-accepting activism through individuals 'activating fatness', seeking change about the body, through the body. In contrast, as a disabled activist, Driedger (2009, p.117) uses art, writing and the internet to extend her limited energy, '*My body does not need to be physically present at all times to be an activist body*'. Acknowledgement of the significance of the body in resistance and activism, illustrates activist experiences as personal, lived and embodied.

The growth of breast feeding activism and 'activist mothering', including events

like breast-feeding picnics in public spaces, offer further examples of corporeal political and social negotiations, broadening our understanding of activism. For Boyer (2011, p.2) *'activist mothering has emerged as an analytical frame in the consideration of urban social movements around issues related to securing conditions needed for daily survival'*. Thus an activity generally considered 'private' is used in public settings to encourage other mothers to breastfeed and also to try to change attitudes and challenge the taboos around breast feeding. Although these picnics are non-confrontational (or not necessarily so) and are not targeted particularly on formal political institutions, the events aim for social change at a small scale, sometimes only at the level of those who attend and passers-by. Empowerment, knowledge sharing, bonding and solidarity are at the root of these events, which blur the boundary between collective, public action and private and personal bodily activities (Carpenter, 2006). Though these events are not conventionally activist, 'Lactivism' takes an everyday corporeal activity for breastfeeding mothers, and performs it in particular ways and in particular contexts, in order to challenge societal taboos, behaviours, expectations, and ultimately call for social, political and cultural change. The body is thus a site of inscription and resistance.

The active production of spaces and cultures that are alternative to, or in opposition to, other spaces and cultures available in society, can be seen as activism. For example, scholars have noted attempts to produce spaces which reflect and promote queer politics and identities<sup>4</sup>. Downes' (2008) research illustrates queer feminist activists utilising culturally activist techniques to create cultural spaces for queer feminist identities. She explains that,

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<sup>4</sup> Queer theory is a school of critical theory which highlights the implausibility of rigid identity categories, by embracing difference and problematizing 'normalcy' through acknowledgement of the diversity and fluidity of identity (Manning, 2009; Stephens-Griffin, 2015). Queer theory has theoretical connections with several academic fields, such as LGBT studies, Women's Studies, gender studies, and most notably post-structuralist studies (Stephens-Griffin, 2015). Post structuralist scholarship, particularly the work of Butler (1990; 1993) and Foucault (1977), influenced the development of 'queer theory' through their focus on deconstruction, raising possibilities for identity boundary deconstruction and the reimagining of gender and sexual identities. In an academic context, queer theory can involve engagements with queerness in identity politics, as well as queer readings of text (Giffney, 2009; Stephens-Griffin, 2015).

*Queer feminist cultural activism can be understood as a praxis which invests in the creation of cultural spaces, communities and representations, in order to survive wider societal denigration of a range of deviant identities and experiences.* (Downes 2008, para. 13)

Queer activists have produced spaces in which the fluidity of gender and sexuality is acknowledged, which question the ways these are constructed and performed in our everyday lives (Downes, 2008; Nicholas, 2009). The queer feminist activism, which Downes (2008) refers to, attempts to create spaces that reflect the identities of the participants, who tend to be marginalised in more mainstream cultural outlets. Further, Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010, p.476) study found that the anti-capitalist activists used everyday practices '*as building blocks to construct a hoped-for future in the present*', a process of producing the world they wish to see. Nicholas (2009) uses the concept of 'prefiguration' to explain where queer activists attempt to put into practice ways of being and doing based on an 'ideal', consistent with Brown and Pickerill's (2009, p1) findings that autonomous activists (such as tactics used by adherents of DIY ethics) attempt to '*prefiguratively enact new post-capitalist social relations*'. Culton and Holtzman (2010) describe the DIY punk scene in Long Island as a 'prefigurative space', in which participants espouse certain values. The creation of alternative spaces, modes of production and cultures in accordance with a movement's politics, though not necessarily oppositional tactics, are legitimate forms of activism (see 2.2.1 for tactics employed within DIY punk). I discuss the creation of spaces, specific to the identities, needs, desires and priorities of my research participants, in my data analysis.

I have thus far argued that the literature illustrates how activism and social movements are complex and should not be conceptualised only as organised, confrontational and targeted on formal organisations and structures, but rather can be understood as existing at a much more personal level, recognising the role of individual actions and experiences in the process of change. This lends substance to the feminist movement's politicisation of the everyday which expresses that the personal is political (Cope, 2004; Taylor & Whittier, 1999). Respecting diversity, in how people act, supports Maxey's (2004, p.159) definition



of activism, as doing what we can from '*where we are at*'. Activist writer Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006, p.178) develops this idea, acknowledging the self in the motivation for, and impact of, activism. She includes '*Cooking Sri Lankan food, hanging with my girls, painting my toenails, praying, fucking, loving the size of my ass and my girlfriend's*' as forms of her own resistance. Piepzna-Samarasinha promotes recognition that direct actions are not equally accessible and safe for everyone (after she faced racism and sexism through involvement in formal direct action), and that everyday actions contribute to social change. This supports a definition that does not rely on expectations of what individuals *should* do, which imply a duty or a cause, but what they have the opportunity to do. Recognition of the significance of individual situations, in how and what people resist, is linked with acceptance that not everyone starts from the same point.

Of relevance here is Naples' (2002) discussion about intersectionality, and assertion that an intersectional analysis is beneficial to feminist social movement research, as it does not abstract gender from other aspects social identity, but acknowledges the complexity of identity and oppression. 'Intersectionality' was originally coined to conceptualise the ways that gender and race intersect with each other (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Crenshaw (1991, p.1244) developed intersectional analysis to illustrate that,

*...the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately.*

Intersectional analysis is useful here, as it recognises the privileging of certain personal and demographic attributes in societies, and that such privileges are complex (for example, a person might experience oppression while benefitting from other forms of privilege). Intersectional analysis further illustrates the complexity of power and resistance, suggesting an understanding of multiple layers of oppression, and therefore resistance, is required to understand activism (this relates to discussions of privilege and burn-out in 2.2.2 and 6.5)

In broadening understandings of activism, greater light is shed onto the significance of the ethic of DIY and culture that is produced through it. Activism,

unlike other potentially suitable concepts, such as resistance, can be more than just oppositional. While recognising the contentiousness of the concept, it is useful to frame DIY action as activism. It is in the framework of 'activism' that I situate this study of DIY punk culture. Though the term 'activism' may be seldom used by DIY punk participants to describe their actions, it is a useful concept to use academically and it is the multiplicity of the concept of activism that makes it so useful for this project. As well as the power that 'activism' as a label brings to actions, 'activism' can also unify the plethora of actions, attitudes and behaviours that occur through DIY. Activism can describe the productive, the creative, the alternative, the political and the cultural as well as the resistant aspects of the DIY ethic in practice. Nicholas (2005) highlights punk as existing beyond a tendency in past punk scholarship to construct it as either wholly resistant, or to dismiss or downplay punk's resistant potential. So, I situate DIY punk within activism, not to distinguish actions that are DIY from those that are not, but to bring together the multiple aspects of DIY ethics and praxis and to acknowledge the complex relationships between the DIY ethic and participation in DIY. I explore the application of a broader and more inclusive definition of activism through the data analysis in 4.4.

Next, I explore the relationship between punk and the DIY ethic. Though there are commonalities in punk sounds, the diversity of punk precludes a definition of punk music as a genre. It is therefore more useful to provide further context for this research on DIY punk, through a brief history of punk movements and punk ideology, rather than attempting to define what punk *is*.

## **2.2 The DIY ethic and punk: history and ideology**

Through DIY punk, place, political action, subculture, cultural production and music intersect. Downes (2012, p.204) explains '*In Britain, punk culture introduced the DIY (do it yourself) ethic to a generation of young people who seized the impetus to create subversive art, music, and culture.*' Rather than rooting DIY in punk, or vice versa, the Trapeze Collective (2007) provide

examples of acts that illustrate that DIY and punk are inter-related, such as putting on shows, making zines, and spreading anti-fascist politics. The historical connection between DIY and punk can be seen in the example of the growth of 'autonomy centres' in the UK in the 1980s. The Trapese Collective (2007, p.107) describe autonomy centres as *'free spaces which grew out of the anger and creativity and punk, along with work by the 'Claimants' Union'*. The DIY ethic *'avoid[s] the capitalist, profit-driven music world by promoting their bands, shows, and records themselves or through small companies'* (Haenfler, 2006, p.24). The DIY ethic and punk have a strong historical relationship, though not all punk is necessarily DIY in practice. In fact, some of the bands most reified as the seminal punk bands worked with and through major record labels, such as The Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Ramones and The Buzzcocks (Cogan, 2008; O'Connor, 2008). To understand the relationship between DIY and punk, we need to conceptualise punk, for which I turn to examples of differences and developments within punk, which illustrate punk's dense yet diverse history. It is important to recognise that there is no one form of 'punk' (musically, aesthetically, historically, culturally, socially and politically). Punk scenes are contextual and are contingent on time, space and place and respond to social condition and context.

Punk has manifested in many forms in its over 35 year history (with influences stretching further). Though for simplicity, the changes can be described as chronologically distinct or coherent phases, these 'waves' are complex and can, and have, existed over different and multiple times, spaces and places and are contextual. For example, though punk's roots are regarded as starting in Britain, punk has always been influenced by music from other countries and cultures (Miernik, 2013). Punk was born out of a discontent with the commercial and commodified nature of popular music at the time. In the early days of punk, in the late 1970s, punk bands wanted to challenge commercial popular music and discourses by producing rock music in their own image. Punk challenged popular music through its musical style (short, sharp, aggressive and not (necessarily) demonstrating professional ability) and lyrical content. O'Meara (2003) explains that bands, such as The Raincoats, utilised punk's passion for musical

amateurism to forge a space for women to fully participate in and challenge rock discourse in the late 1970s. Anarcho-punk erupted out of discontent with the commercialisation of punk in the UK. The notable Anarcho-punk bands, Crass and Rudimentary Peni, attempted to reclaim the anti-capitalist and radical roots of punk, by openly promoting anarchist politics and challenging bands such as The Clash and The Sex Pistols and their relationship with major labels (Cogan, 2008; Dale, 2008; Glasper, 2007). Dale (2008, p.176-7) explains Crass' far-reaching resistant actions,

*...though they [Crass] seized the control of manufacture, distribution and exchange by creating their own label, and aided others in doing the same ... their ambitions went far beyond this. Moreover, Crass attempted to confront authorities beyond the music industry, including the church, the army and the government.*

Hardcore punk developed in the early 1980s. It started as a synonym for punk but developed into its own distinct genre (Kuhn, 2010; Mageary, 2012). Hardcore is attributed to developments in the Washington DC punk scene. Hardcore punk became characterised by heavier, faster and more musically and lyrically aggressive performances than the punk that had preceded it, and short, sharp songs (Mielnik, 2013). Peterson (2009) described hardcore punk participants' relationship with the DIY ethos and its resistance to 'mainstream society', as a combination of necessity and a desire for autonomy. Many notable early Washington DC hardcore bands promoted a DIY ethic, and Ian Mackaye (of Washington DC hardcore bands Minor Threat and Fugazi, among others) founded 'Dischord Records', a seminal independent record label that operated with a DIY ethos (O'Connor, 2008). The ethos that Fugazi and Minor Threat espoused exemplifies connections between the DIY ethic and other ideologies, through Fugazi's commitment to building community and supporting local communities, as well as Minor Threat's promotion of a straight edge lifestyle<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A straight edge lifestyle avoids the use of recreational drugs and alcohol and for many participants includes refraining from the use of violence, promiscuous sex and for some, the consumption of animal products (Griffin, 2013 and Haenfler, 2004a&b, 2006). 'The straight edge movement emerged on the East Coast of the United States from the punk subculture of the early 1980s. The movement arose primarily as a response to the punk scene's nihilistic tendencies, including drug and alcohol abuse, casual sex, violence, and self-destructive "live-for-the-moment"

(Azerrad, 2001). The relationship between hardcore punk and straight edge (also represented as sXe) has been granted academic attention (see Haenfler, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Kuhn, 2010; Mullaney, 2007; Torkelson, 2010; Wood, 2006). Straight edge remains a prominent lifestyle choice, (sub)cultural signifier and movement within punk culture.

Emo offered a more melodic musical style, to earlier punk, and grew out of early 1980s hardcore in the East Coast USA. Emo drew on many different musical influences (Mielnik, 2013) and illustrates the significance of place and social condition in punk manifestations. Emo, unlike earlier punk, was not associated with working-class struggles. Emo instead,

*...stressed its middle-class roots, distanced itself from overtly deviant or subversive norms, especially in relation to the authorities of the “dominant” culture (Mielnik, 2013, p.179)*

'Emocore', a heavier sub-genre to Emo, where emo and hardcore intersect, has clearer values and proponents than Emo (Phillipov, 2010). Emocore, like hardcore, was associated with left wing politics and many proponents embraced a straight edge lifestyle. However, hardcore and emocore differed in their political focus and strategy. Hardcore attempted to challenge

*....political structures and expressed an anti-establishment stance, whereas emocore focused on matters closely related to alienation, particularly social alienation, teenage angst, as well as themes of male/female romantic relationships. (Mielnik, 2013, p.177)*

Emo provides a good example of how music genres and styles changes over time, as the majority of emo of today is very different to that which emerged from US hardcore in the early 1980s (Mielnik, 2013). Post-punk bands, such as Joy Division (Mielnik, 2013), also played with the punk musical style, producing more experimental music with a 'futurist' spirit (Reynolds, 2005). The Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s played with punk in musical style, lyrics, and performative challenges to sexist punk discourses and gender inequalities in the punk that

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attitudes. Its founding members adopted a “clean-living” ideology, abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and promiscuous sex’ (Haenfler, 2004b, p. 409).

preceded it (seen in Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill's iconic performance with the word 'slut' written across her torso). Downes (2008; 2012) addresses a gap in literature on punk that tends to downplay or exclude the influence and importance of the 'Riot Grrrl' movement, which seized opportunities to challenge musical masculinity and gender bias in punk. Hence, punk has a diverse and rich history.

The history of DIY and punk's relationship, though diverse, contextual and always in flux, remains significant. In response to the diversity and instability of punk and the recognition that assumptions of punk as implicitly DIY are problematic, I now describe the focus of this thesis more clearly as contemporary punk, which explicitly purports commitment to a DIY ethic. I do so in the knowledge that drawing clear boundaries around specific types of 'punk' is always somewhat crude and simplistic.

### **2.2.1 DIY Punk ethics in Practice**

Unlike other music subcultures, DIY punk is resistant to being defined by one specific sound or genre and is instead more focused on ties through and beyond the musical style that connect the subculture (Culton & Holtzman, 2010). DIY punk is traditionally organised in opposition to the mainstream capitalist music industry, organised around anti-capitalist modes of production, distribution and performance (Dale, 2008; Haenfler, 2006; Moore & Roberts, 2009). So, DIY punk as a music subculture is rooted in political anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment and anti-capitalist ideology (Ambrosch, 2011; Dale, 2008). A commitment to 'doing it ourselves' can be seen in the alternative means of music production, distribution and exchange. For example, Dale (2008, p.180) tells us that DIY record labels remain popular as a conscious DIY method of resistance to the *'hegemony of the major labels and the mainstream music industry'*, utilising alternative modes of production and promotion of music. Such alternative modes resist capitalism and act as a critique of capitalism (Dale, 2008; Thompson 2012). A DIY ethic may be reflected at music events (or 'shows' here-on) in alternative or unusual venue use, such as houses or community centres, cheap door prices,

the promotion of bands who adhere to and espouse a DIY ethic, and affordable merchandise (see 4.1).

The discontent with and resistance to, what are deemed, negative aspects of mainstream culture stretches further than the means of music production, distribution and performance within DIY punk. The DIY punk ethic has been linked with other broader political ideologies; it aims to resist, through the creation of alternative spaces, sources of oppression commonly present and even accepted in mainstream society, such as sexism, racism and homophobia (Cherry, 2006; Culton & Holtzman 2010; Haenfler, 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Mullaney, 2007; O'Hara, 1999). These ethics are often represented in song lyrics, band merchandise, promotional material, also in that many events are organised to raise money for political and activist groups (Culton & Holtzman, 2010). Individuals involved in punk culture are not just connected to the subculture through the enjoyment of the genre of music, but also (and often stated as more importantly) connected to the subculture because of the 'abstract political ideals' promoted within it (Cherry, 2006).

DIY punk participants are seen as '*influenced by political praxis and intent not found in other scenes and at other shows*' (Culton & Holtzman, 2010, p.272). There is also a noted desire for space that enables and supports alternative values to those predominant in 'mainstream' society, or promoted by parents, television, work, school, et cetera (Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Haenfler, 2004b; Mullaney, 2007; O'Hara, 1999). DIY punk scenes do not necessarily just position themselves as opposing to, or alternative to, 'mainstream society', but also in reaction to other subcultures (as discussed by Haenfler (2004a; 2006) in research on the straight edge movement). From their research into a DIY punk scene in Long Island, Culton and Holtzman (2010) discuss how the local scene they studied emphasised their differences from other non-DIY local music scenes at the time. Other music subcultures considered under the broader umbrella of 'punk', even those that professed a commitment to 'DIY', tended to identify

themselves according to a style of the music (such as 'emo' or 'ska'), whereas the Long Island 'DIY Scene' was defined by its participants with a clear statement of the ethics, values and goals beyond the music. This point is significant, given a tendency in literature on punk, such as Moran (2010), to discuss punk as inherently DIY, rather than understanding DIY punk as distinct from other, more commercial forms of punk music. The forms of relational opposition, in Culton and Holtzman's (2010) case study, also reflect the variation within and between punk scenes and in how punk is imagined academically. It is clear that punk has a long-standing relationship with resistance and, more specifically, with a DIY ethic, but exactly how this manifests depends on the context of the particular scenes. This discussion relates to debates on how to conceptualise subcultures, in light of the variations in motivations, ideology, participation and relationships with other scenes (see 2.3).

The relationship between punk and 'the mainstream' (further discussed in section 2.3) changes over time (O'Connor, 2008) and, as Mielnik (2013) illustrates when discussing emo, music scenes and subcultures respond to the zeitgeist of the day. DIY punk is distinct from mainstream music industry practices and corporate punk, in its anti-capitalist modes of production and distribution. Though this thesis focuses on punk participation in the context of a self-defined 'DIY' punk scene, this discussion has shown that the lines, between the corporate, profit-oriented, mainstream music industry (complex and not homogeneous in its nature) and DIY punk, are not always clear, as these fields intersect with each other (Dale, 2008). Liz Prince (2014), the web diary comic creator and punk enthusiast, illustrates the intersections between corporate and DIY punk in her comic 'a card-carrying Greenday idiot' (fig. 1), where she explains how Greenday, though a corporate punk band, introduced her, as a young person growing up in a small town, to the world of punk. The comic includes the quote *'So THANK YOU Greenday, for introducing us kids ... to the contradictions, hypocrisies, petty rivalries and idiosyncrasies of punk'*, which succinctly describes some of the key debates that are central to academic literature on punk and this thesis.





February 1st, 2014 is the 20th anniversary of Green Day's Dookie being released



By the time I came into awareness, they were already controversial



but it was through them that I discovered the small label punk world they had left behind



which got me involved in DIY punk



(where I was excited about local bands)



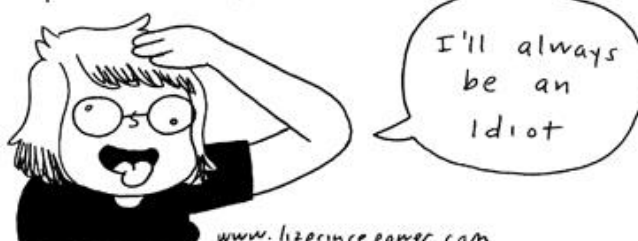
and introduced me to zines and self-publishing



So far as much as Green Day sold out, I bought in



SO THANK YOU, GREEN DAY, for introducing us kids who weren't blessed with cool older siblings or who grew up in the middle of nowhere, to the contradictions, hypocrisies, petty rivalries, and idiosyncrasies of PUNK



[www.lizprincepower.com](http://www.lizprincepower.com)

Figure 1. 'A card-carrying Greenday idiot'

The boundaries between punk and mainstream culture are multiple and blurred, not always necessarily in opposition. The DIY record label, Dischord Records and the anarcho-punk bands Crass and Throbbing Gristle, among countless others, have sought distribution through major label subsidiaries (Dunn, 2012; Cogan, 2008). Yet Cogan (2008) defends the decision by Crass and Throbbing Gristle, arguing that such a deal does not remove the subversion that the bands have been credited with,

*...Crass and Throbbing Gristle, did have to work with distribution systems to which they were opposed on principle, but they did so more in the spirit of subversion than in acquiescence to the dominant hierarchy (Cogan, 2008, p.77).*

Such debates are often imbued with concerns about what counts as authentically punk.

Authenticity has been given much attention within punk scholarship and punk cultures, debates about what counts as (or often more importantly what does not count as) authentically 'punk' (Bannister, 2007; Daschuk, 2011; Moore, 2004; Schnitker, 2011). For Moore (2004), punks' creation of alternative media (such as punk zine<sup>6</sup> publications and DIY music production) reflects their striving for independence from the culture industry, as a response to post-modern society. Participants want to resist the mainstream co-option of punk culture, which has been seen many times over the course of punk's history, since the mainstream interest in punk in the 1970, famously signified by the signing of the Clash to CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), a corporate major music label (Gray, 2004). Riot Grrrl also faced commodification by the mainstream media, who saw commercial value in Riot Grrrl's aesthetic but worked to reduce its political power

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<sup>6</sup> Zines is the usual abbreviation of fanzines. They are DIY publications often discussing music, politics and other topics relevant to DIY punk culture. They are often short run and cheaply printed and produced (for example hand-made and photocopied in black and white), but they can be more high quality and printed in greater quantities (Griffin, 2012).

through its 'decontextualised adoption' of the word 'grrrl' in the 1990s (Jaques, 2001). Mainstream media and commercial co-option of DIY punk culture could potentially be seen today in a recent interest in DIY cultural activism by mainstream media outlets (such as the Guardian, NME, and Noisey: Knox, 2014; Mumford, 2014; Noisey Staff, 2014; Pelly, 2013; Schreurs, 2014). Participants fear the dilution of the punk rebellion by commercialisation and the weakening of punk cultures as alternative (Moore, 2005).

'Sell out' rhetoric, prevalent in punk cultures, is used to highlight those cases where participants fail to adhere to participant notions of what punk is, or more specifically 'DIY punk' (Gordon, 2005). When authenticity is gained through acting in opposition to a dominant 'field of power' (in Bourdieu's sense, see 2.3.1) or 'mainstream', then those who are regarded as undermining this principle by, for example, a band signing to a major label, face criticism (Daschuk, 2011; Gordon, 2005). 'Sell out' rhetoric is used to reinforce the goal of the field of punk to oppose the desires, expectations and music industry practices of the mainstream, by stigmatising those who break punk convention,

*Should artists ... break with these conventions of 'orthodox' artistic practice, they run the risk of being accused of an artistic 'heresy' which effectively annuls their status as authentic cultural producers. (Daschuk, 2011, p609)*

Participants authenticate themselves and their punk practices through the marking out of what they consider to be authentically punk (Gordon, 2005). Participants narratively construct DIY punk by negotiating which ethics and actions are authentically punk, and which are not (Gordon, 2005).

The complex, yet rich, history, of punk's relationship with the DIY ethic, resonates with Moore and Roberts' (2009), consideration of DIY as a mechanism within punk, which encourages creativity and mobilisation and the formation of communities (see 2.3.3) around the ethic of DIY. This definition allows for the recognition of diversity within punk music and practices, while emphasising distinctions between DIY punk practices and mainstream music industry practices. In light of such debates then, how DIY should, or can, DIY punk be?

Addressing this question requires acceptance that an answer must be complex, subjective and contextual, and remains an issue of great contest and concern for DIY punk participants. I explore the concept of authenticity through the research findings and analysis (6.1, 6.2 & 6.4). I look at how the concept of authenticity is used by participants, rather than attempting to express what is and is not authentically punk (see 2.3.1 and 3.2 on the importance of focusing on participant subjectivities, rather than fruitlessly attempting to define what counts as punk).

Next I consider the ways that identity politics are challenged and negotiated within punk, what expectations people have of punk participation, in terms of ideology and behaviour, and how different attitudes are challenged within and through punk music, performance and culture.

### **2.2.2 The complexities of punk ideology in practice**

The process of using everyday practices of resistance and cultural production, to create 'building blocks' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010) for the desired realities of punk participants, is complex. Conflicts in collective consciousness, contradictory ethics and behaviours, and disparities about what aspects of 'mainstream society' should be the focus of punk resistance, further highlight the need to avoid reductive theories of subcultural resistance. The complex relationship between DIY ethics and practice is explored further in my analysis (see chapters 4 and 6).

DIY punk culture offers the opportunity for the cultural production of alternatives to capitalist practices. However, as noted above, capitalism deliberately limits opportunities available to oppose it (Thompson, 2012). Despite anti-capitalist aims, participants must negotiate the DIY ethic in practice, within capitalist potentialities. Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010, p.488) research of autonomous political activists, was carried out over two years and used in depth interviews, focus groups and consultations. They found that participants '*engaged with, express identities, practices and spatial forms that are simultaneously anti-*

*despite- and post- capitalist*'. As activism that seeks to critique, resist, and provide alternatives to capitalism will be limited by capitalist structures, putting DIY punk ethics into practice requires careful negotiation within and beyond the opportunities available in capitalist societies (see 6.2). For Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.488), processes that attempt to create 'post-capitalist worlds' are 'interstitial' (that is, existing between two worlds) and therefore activist practices will '*sometimes feel embedded or trapped in capitalist ways of doing things, and at other times will be more liberatory or antagonistic*'. In Chapter 6 I explore how the notion of DIY punk cultural production helps to further understanding of the tensions and dilemmas that DIY punk participants face, interstitially, as part of the complex negotiations that take place in the creation of *hoped-for futures in the present* (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010, p.475).

Similar tensions occur where participants are actively seeking spaces and communities that reify the ethics of DIY beyond anti-capitalism, attempting prefigurative (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009) cultural production through DIY punk ethics, which address social inequality and identity. The historical presence of queer politics and queer cultural practices within punk cultures (particularly 'queer' hardcore or 'queercore') are explored by Ensminger (2010), who recognises a potential for punks to produce 'liminal zones', where oppressive systems, such as homophobia and sexism, may be temporarily suspended. However, there remains a continuous conflict, between those who identify the scene as a 'queer space', and the hetero-normative assumptions and homophobic behaviours and perceptions, which still remain in punk scenes (Ensminger, 2010). Punk is not immune to the perniciousness of hetero-normativity (Leblanc, 1999), for example, Haenfler (2006) notes that, while homophobia and homophobic behaviour are generally condemned, by the participants he reported on, there remains a more passive acceptance of homophobia in many punk scenes. The tensions between radical politics and the pernicious reproduction of heteronormativity and sexism, present in wider society, are considered. As Mullaney (2007, p.387) illustrates, there is a tense relationship between punk subcultures and resistance to attitudes deemed

negative by participants,

*...even a subculture deliberately carved out to oppose mainstream norms and values ends up reinforcing masculinist ideals and male-defined gender expectations.*

Authors, who have looked specifically at the straight edge punk movement, have illustrated complex contradictions within punk resistances. As a subculture whose participants are predominantly men, it has been revealed that some participants reject hegemonic masculinity that values hierarchy, sexual prowess, physical strength and emotional distance (Haenfler 2006). These alternative notions of masculinity, including ideologies of abstinence, represent a renegotiation of masculinity that could create more inclusive and safer punk spaces for women, and others who do not identify with the aspects of hegemonic masculinity that are being negotiated (Griffin, 2012) (see 6.3 and 6.4). However, male-centred discourse and a focus on male bonding to overcome negative masculinities can result in the exclusion of women from a scene (Mullaney, 2007). Participant references to straight edge as a form of 'brotherhood', along with more overt examples of sexism, contribute to a discursive gender bias (Wood, 2006). This gender bias has been noted within punk more broadly, and in other subcultures (Cohen, 1997; Downes, 2012; Mullaney, 2007). The insights provided by these authors are helpful, in illustrating the complex and sensitive relationship between nurturing collective identity, inclusion and strategies of resistance and the negotiation of gender relations, in spaces where there is a clear gender bias. In local scenes, where there are clear identity imbalances (such as participants being predominantly male), those in the majority are in a position to determine the discourse of punk in these local contexts, ultimately controlling the 'voice' of the scene by producing the music and deciding which bands will play. It seems that because of a gender imbalance, there is a risk that women's opinions and contributions are overlooked, even where attempts are made to challenge gender norms.

The roles that women play in punk can be marginalised when scenes are or

appear to be male-dominated<sup>7</sup>. For Mullaney (2007), in the 'boys club' that is the punk music scene, girls are treated as 'supporting cast'. The vocal and physical interaction between audience and performers, seen at punk shows, blurs the boundaries between those 'on stage' and those in the 'audience'. There is an altered power dynamic, reflected in the use of space, to that which may be expected at corporate shows (Griffin, 2012). However, research on punk has raised concerns about women tending to be less visible in the band and audience interactions. O'Hara (1999) revealed an uneven gendered spatiality, observing a gradual movement of women to the edges of the room at shows, leading to a gradual absence of women at shows altogether. It has also been noted that, at shows, women are often assumed to be someone's girlfriend (Haenfler, 2006; Wood, 2006). Utilising Butler's (1990) focus on performativity<sup>8</sup>, the role that space plays in the construction of social identity and social power dynamics is explored by Gregson and Rose (2000). If women's presence in punk spaces is marginalised and women are assumed to be 'girlfriends', rather than active participants, their participation is undervalued. Similarly, where this is the case, the paucity of women's involvement in more visible roles may be regarded as unproblematic and therefore go unquestioned (Griffin, 2012). Similar concerns have been raised about the imbalance of identities, in terms of race and ethnicity, in punk spaces. For example Settles (2011), from her own observations as a musician, and Nguyen's (2011: p.258) reflections that a '*whitestraightboy hegemony organises punk*' (both US based commentators) illustrate inequalities in some punk spaces and the way they are organised. Then, drawing on Gregson and Rose's (2000) geographical analysis of space in other forms of community activism, the construction of punk spaces through social interactions, as well as absence of identities within punk spaces, may highlight concerns about inequalities within DIY punk cultural production, despite purported ethics of equality.

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<sup>7</sup> The 'male' in my use of 'male-dominated' refers to hegemonic understandings of men, maleness and masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)

<sup>8</sup> Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, which questions universal and dichotomous assumptions about gender identity and proposes instead that gender is performed and constituted through repetition of these performances (Griffin, 2012).

Dancing in particular styles, which are observable in some DIY punk shows, can imply problematic and exclusionary use of space and may provide an example of gendered performativity. For Downes (2012), 'indie shows' (which could be inclusive of, or used interchangeably with, DIY punk shows) privilege the 'mosh pit'<sup>9</sup>. The dancing at heavier shows (particularly at hardcore shows) often involves ('simulated') punching, raised fists, pushing, and collisions. Atmosphere, passion for the music and the philosophy underpinning it may explain such bodily performances (Griffin, 2012), challenging a view that this style of dancing and movement is meaningless violence<sup>10</sup> (Heanfler, 2006). Yet, how passion is expressed and encoded here could be understood as masculine and exclusionary (Griffin, 2012). O'Hara's (1999) observation of a gradual movement of women to the edges of the room at punk shows, and eventually out of the room altogether, was found to be part of a process of men becoming more dominant within punk spaces. The coding of dancing in mosh pits, as a problematic or exclusionary masculine bodily performance, is contextual, not exclusive to men's bodies, and is not inclusive of all men's bodies. However, in the context of spaces with a large gender bias of more men and where masculinity is privileged, certain expressions of passion and aggressive dancing may pose an exclusionary use of space.

A focus on the masculinity of punk spaces, however, may neglect the involvement of women in punk, which is connected to concerns about women being written out of punk, or broader subcultural, histories (Downes, 2012; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). As noted previously (see 2.2), notable punk bands, such as The Raincoats and those involved in the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s, utilised the political potential of punk to challenge assumptions about gender within punk and within society in general (Downes, 2008; O'Meara, 2003).

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<sup>9</sup> The mosh pit is a space within an audience, created by the energetic collisions and dancing of the participants involved.

<sup>10</sup> Although it has noted that some participants abuse a situation that allows for violence with impunity (Heanfler, 2006)



Presenting The Raincoats as an example, O'Meara (2003, p.300) discusses how punk ideology can be, and has been, used by women to challenge the masculine assumptions of the punk genre, using punk ideology of '*passionate amateurism to express feminine possibilities*'. Riot Grrrl responded not only to sexism within society as a whole, but also to the reproduction of sexism within punk. Riot Grrrl, then, reflected a need to counter sexism within punk, as well as establishing punk as a field appropriate for the questioning of gender inequalities, stereotypes and boundaries.

There are disparities in DIY punk collective consciousness and in the implementation of punk ideologies. The activist tactics and counter hegemonic ideals purported in DIY punk scenes are not necessarily consistent across individuals and scenes. Punks' ideological diversity is illustrated by O'Connor's (2010) comparison of two prominent punk bands. This describes a lack of political commonalities between the British anarcho-punk band, Crass, and the American straight edge band Earth Crisis who have conservative and anti-abortion lyrics. Quotes from a, seemingly, DIY punk band are used by Culton and Holtzman (2010), to illustrate how individuals can appear to conform to DIY ideologies through their DIY punk cultural praxis, while dismissing a personal commitment to DIY principles. Such a disconnect '*demonstrates the existence of differences between ideological and physical commitment to a group*' (Culton & Holtzman, 2010, p281) and further exemplifies the complexity of punk participation, principles and politics. Particularly as significant dis-junctures between ideology and practice can be difficult to identify, for internal scene members as well as those outside of DIY punk culture.

Finally, processes of punk authentication through sell-out rhetoric (2.1.1) may be problematic and cause tensions in DIY punk participation. In a collaborative guide to diversity in feminist activism, Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006) proposes a re-imagining of sell-out rhetoric within activist movements, criticising sell-out discourses for ignoring the fundamental issue of privilege. Some forms of activism are not inclusive for everyone. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006) explains that people

of colour, particularly women, in NYC post 9/11, were not given enough respect and that the activist movement she was involved in was set up without their needs in mind. Burn-out, and therefore the exiting of activist participation, can result from a lack of collective support, and participants trying to live up to unrealistic or unobtainable expectations within movements, and participants feeling shamed for not living up to expectations (Brown & Pickerill, 2006; Kleres, 2005; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Piepzna-Samarasina, 2006; Plows, 2008). Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006) suggests that there should be greater attention paid to 'burning out' rather than selling out within activist discourses. This complements Brown and Pickerill's (2009) call for greater concern for instances of burn-out in activist participation and the serious emotional causes and effects of burn-out. Kovan and Dirkx's (2003, p.113) acknowledge the toll that the '*juggling hope and despair*' has on activists over time. Therefore, the conflicts addressed in this section, such as instances of sexism, homophobia, and racism, especially when left unchallenged (Brown & Pickerill, 2009), may serve to alienate participants and challenge ongoing participation (see 6.5).

The contentions and potentialities involved in enacting DIY ethics, highlighted in the literature on DIY punk, illustrate the complex relationship between DIY ethics and action. The different accounts from scenes (such as straight edge, queercore, and Riot Grrrl) and spaces reflect again the importance of place, in both the physicality of localised scenes, as O'Connor (2002) discussed, and also where individuals place themselves within the DIY punk scene(s). The literature in this area shows that the ways in which identities and DIY ethics are performed, enacted and negotiated in DIY punk spaces are not static. There is potential for renegotiations of gender, for example, within DIY punk, but also potential for the reproduction of oppressive gendered systems. This thesis further explores the instances and effects of tensions explored in this section through data analysis in Chapter 6.

## **2.3 Subculture, scene, social movement, or all of the above?**

Here I turn to developments in subcultural studies, in order to develop a suitable framework to study DIY punk participation and culture. Punk can be recognised as a cultural field that provides individuals with cultural resources for expressing counter-hegemonic resistance, within systems of global communication (Dunn, 2008, 2012). It is in this context that I situate my study, acknowledging that the boundaries between DIY/independent/punk/mainstream are complex and fluid. This section then considers how to approach the study of DIY punk, drawing from developments in subcultural theories, literature that explores the negotiation of participant and punk ideology and politics, and debates around how to frame punk 'subcultures', 'scenes' and/or 'communities'.

### **2.3.1 Developments in subcultural studies**

In contextualising DIY punk within broader punk literature, it is necessary to engage with subcultural literature and the developments within subcultural studies, to understand how the relationship between punk and resistance has been conceptualised to date. Past subcultural studies, and particularly punk studies, tended to focus on style and aesthetic resistance to dominant culture, implying or asserting style and punk aesthetics as the essence of subcultural life and resistance (Haenfler, 2004b; Muggleton, 2005). More recent work has challenged this interpretation. The relationship between subcultural resistance and style is associated with the early work of Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which tended to pay great attention to symbolic youth resistance through alternative styles (Clarke et al., 1975; Haenfler, 2004b; Hebdige, 1979; Martin, 2004). This approach recognised subcultural resistance mostly in terms of style, and attributed this resistance to a desire to avoid taking part in 'oppressive society', which generally resulted from frustration with lack of economic and social opportunities, and a questioning of adult authority (Haenfler, 2004b; Martin, 2004; Muggleton, 2005).

One of the earliest and most prominent academic writers on the topic of

'subcultures' was Hebdige (1979), whose book was entitled '*Subculture: The Meaning of Style*' and explored subcultural life and resistances through style. Although very influential in the growth of the field of subcultural studies, this work has met criticism for oversights in its attempt to address 'subculture'. Cohen (1987) criticised Hebdige's work as essentialist, and for making claims about the aims of punk participants that were unfounded and could not be generalised in the way Hebdige implied. More recently, O'Connor (2010) has criticised Hebdige's approach for lacking grounding in place (implying that punk is the same wherever you look), and for not eliciting the views and accounts of punk participants to inform his analyses. The early approaches of the CCCS has been criticised for not recognising participant subjectivity, for the focus on Marxist/class-based analysis (Haenfler, 2004b; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006), reliance on 'structuralist' assumptions about subcultures and for reifying notions of subcultures as monolithic and of participants as organised around identifiable and distinguishable beliefs (Martin, 2004). Overall, the weaknesses of these assumptions have been attributed to relying too heavily on theory, rather than empirical practice.

Developments in subcultural theory, and in the work of those researching punk more specifically, reflect how style may be important for the participants but a focus on style is not adequate for understanding a whole movement. The benefits of utilising body technologies, to nurture a sense of collective identity<sup>11</sup>, have been acknowledged as particularly important in providing structure for diffuse movements (Haenfler, 2004a; Staggenborg, 2001). Still, caution is required when the emphasis is put on style in studying subcultural resistances. The critiques of previous subcultural studies illustrate the complexity of subcultural activity and identities. A focus on style risks delegitimising and reducing the power and impact of subcultural action, overlooking, for example, attempts to provide alternative means of production and distribution to the mainstream music industry, which has

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<sup>11</sup>'Collective identity' is a social-psychological concept that explains how social movements maintain and build connections and strength over time (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). See 2.3.3 and 5.3.1.

a historical presence in DIY punk.

Post-structuralist critiques of the approach of the CCCS emphasise that many different narratives are possible within one subcultural context (Haenfler, 2004b). Haenfler's (2004b) research was based on his own lengthy participant observations and interviews with other straight edge punk participants. Despite collectivities of identity and consciousness (see 2.2.1 and 2.3.2), subcultures cannot be assumed to be bounded homogenous groups with clear and agreed boundaries of 'us' and 'them' (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Hodkinson, 2005; Martin, 2004). To avoid the over-simplification of the nature of subcultural life, it is necessary to recognise that (subcultural) identities are unstable and mutual and that individuals can *'cross-cut a variety of different groups rather than attaching themselves substantively to any in particular'* (Hodkinson, 2005, p.133). 'Post-subcultural'<sup>12</sup> debates have sought to engage with critiques of 'essentialism' within subcultural studies, allowing the exploration of movements that are diffuse and fragmented (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Haenfler, 2004a; Muggleton, 2005). Similarly, Martin (2004) situates the development of subcultural studies, since the work of the CCCS, within a broader development in sociological work, which has moved from structuralist to more interpretivist and interactionist approaches to the study of social life, questioning some of the foundational concepts of sociological analysis (such as socio-economic class, nation state, organisation and family). Jenkins' (2002) observation that sociological research and theorising often rely on a misconception or overstatement of the *'boundedness of collectivities'*, complements Martin's (2004) analysis. Consequently, critiques have suggested there is a need to ensure that research is based on real, embodied, social experience (see 3.1 for my methodological incorporation of this guidance).

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<sup>12</sup> 'Post-subcultural' studies loosely describes research acknowledging the fragmentation of 'youth' or subcultures since the 1980s, reflected in approaches to the study of youth and subcultures

Developments in social movement scholarship are useful here. Social movements are diverse, from very structured bureaucratic movements to diffuse movements with no formal structure. Social movement theory has broadened over time from a majority of work focusing on the former, to greater attention paid to diffuse movements (Gecas, 2000, Haenfler, 2004a; McAdam, 1994; Moore & Roberts, 2009). New Social Movement theory has developed subcultural studies through its attention to *'culture, lifestyle, expressive action, ideology, grievance construction, the micro level of movement activity, and the connection between individual and collective identity'* (Haenfler, 2004a, p.786). Collective identity is now seen as crucial to understanding commitment to social movements (Gecas, 2000; Haenfler, 2004a). Yet, further development is needed to be able to explain diffuse movements, such as punk, as literature remains limited (Furness, 2012; Haenfler, 2004a).

Post-subcultural work has illustrated that subcultures are not as easily definable as was once thought, highlighting the impact of globalisation and consumerism on the boundedness of subcultures, as well as the fragmentation of youth style (Muggleton, 2000). In a globally connected society, with a rapid proliferation of images, fashions and lifestyles, it is unsurprisingly becoming increasingly difficult to pinpoint what 'subculture' actually means, particularly in terms of style (Clark, 2003; Muggleton, 2000). This is exemplified by, for example, the availability of 'punk' t-shirts in chain shopping outlets. These critiques do not suggest that there are no connections that can be made or groupings that can be researched in relation to subcultures, but that individual participation, experiences and intentions must be emphasised, over commonalities in style, in explaining and understanding subcultural resistance (Furness, 2012).

The notion that there are 'subcultures' rooted within an overarching 'parent' or 'core' culture has been critiqued (Chaney, 2004; Dale, 2008) as the fragmented nature of contemporary culture suggests that the framing of punk (or other cultural movements/groupings) as a 'subculture' is inappropriate. Simplistic ideas of punk

as wholly in opposition to mainstream society are challenged by Dale (2008), on the grounds that cultural fields (commercial and non-commercial and capitalist and non-capitalist) intersect in complex ways. Yet, the dismissal of a core culture may be problematic, as responding to, rejecting, and subverting negative aspects of 'mainstream' society remains important to DIY punk participants. Research that seeks to understand the motivation of participants involved in punk (and DIY punk more specifically) has found that participants often frame their involvement as, at least in part, a reaction to negative aspects of what they consider to be 'mainstream society' (Clark, 2003; Dale, 2008; Handler, 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Moore & Roberts, 2009; Mullaney, 2007). In the context of literature on DIY punk, this often refers to a rejection of a capitalist, profit-driven mainstream media and/or music industry (Moore and Roberts 2009), as well as systems of oppression in dominant culture, which may include class systems, capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and, less often but still prominent, speciesism (Griffin, 2012; Haenfler, 2006). A useful way to frame punk participation is offered by Clark (2003), with the use of the notion of a 'mainstream', illustrating the real, felt presence of a 'mainstream', while explaining it as imagined,

*The mainstream is used to denote an imaginary hegemonic centre of corporatized culture... It is in a sense an archetype, rather than something used with a precise location and character. It serves to conveniently outline a dominant culture for purposes of cultural critique and identity formation.*  
(Clark, 2003, p. 224)

This definition explains the possibility of opposition to a dominant culture, while illustrating that this dominant culture is not, in reality, homogeneous.

There is little agreement about what exactly punk is: a music genre, subculture, a system of subcultures, or what is quite often referred to as a 'scene', (or as individual 'scenes' that are connected to a wider scene), a social movement, or a community (or communities), or all of the above. Yet, in the introduction to 'Punkademics', an edited collection of essays that uncover tensions in the interaction between 'punk' and academia, Furness (2012) warns against the academic 'faux pas' of getting lost in terminological debates that are of little concern to those who participate in the cultures in question, particularly critiquing

unending debates about whether to describe punk as a 'subculture', 'youth culture' or 'post- modern tribe', rather than discussing what punks actually do. There are debates around the meaning and boundaries of punk and DIY specific nomenclature that have far more significance to participants, such as who and what participants regard as DIY and punk and how participants label themselves and others (see 5.3.1). Learning from the developments in subcultural and post-subcultural studies, it is clear that attempts to reduce and simplify specific subcultures, into coherent and identifiable homogenous groups, are problematic.

Instead of focusing on punk as a 'subculture', regarding punk as a 'field' may be more helpful and avoids getting lost in the debates described by Furness (2012). Bourdieu's (1993) theory of the 'field of cultural production' has been used by Moore (2007) as an appropriate way to frame research on punk, which emphasises participation<sup>13</sup>. Bourdieu's (1993) theory attends to social networks and relationships, and organisation and mobilization within a field, which maintains a level of autonomy from wider (mainstream or 'parent') societal structures. Viewing punk as a 'field' is useful as it facilitates a focus on participants and the roles and positions they enact, rather than where the boundaries of punk lie, without assuming one homogeneous punk culture (Dunn, 2008; O'Connor, 2010). For Dunn (2008, p196), the concept of punk as a 'field' allows us to move on from debates about what exactly counts as 'punk' onto what happened within and through punk,

*Rather than defining and reifying artificial boundaries of what is and is not punk, I am more concerned about how the field of punk provides individuals with cultural resources for expressing counter-hegemonic resistance within systems of global communication.*

Within cultural fields there are always struggles and conflicts, as actors try to negotiate cultural resources, power, autonomy, recognition and goals (Dale, 2008; Dunn, 2008; Moore, 2007). The framing of DIY punk participants within a field of cultural production fits particularly well, when considering DIY ethics that encourage participants to take matters into their own hands (Moore & Roberts,

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<sup>13</sup> The examples of fields discussed by Bourdieu (1993) include art, literature, and philosophy (Moore 2007).



2009).

While supporting post-subcultural debates that have critiqued the structuralist traditions of subcultural studies, we must be mindful of concerns about wholly post-modern accounts of subcultural lives being unable to account for ever present structural oppressions and restrictions (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006) (see 2.2.2). A vital lesson to be learned, from these debates in subcultural studies, is that attention should be paid to the participation of individuals, what they are doing, why they are doing it and their individual subjectivities (Furness, 2012). As discussed, such debates also highlight the complexity and limitation of conceptions of a homogeneous 'mainstream' or 'parent culture' and bounded and identifiable 'subcultures', while recognising that such concepts are useful and used by participants themselves (shown throughout the findings of this research). There is no one punk subculture; there is a multitude of punk subcultures, the lines between which are not easily drawn. The following section develops a concept of DIY punk as an imagined community, or imagined communities, to illustrate how DIY punk as a diffuse movement maintains strength and boundedness despite diversity within DIY punk.

### **2.3.2 DIY Punk as imagined communities**

While 'subculture' remains a useful umbrella term for punk, the appropriateness of 'subculture' as a concept for *explaining* the phenomenon of DIY punk is critiqued. I therefore turn to the theory of 'imagined community' as a useful concept, for understanding DIY punk as a diffuse movement, bounded through collective consciousness, collective identity and community networks (utilising geographical perspectives). My review of the literature found only one application of the concept of imagined community in a punk context (Moore & Roberts, 2009) and the research was based on a collection of case studies from the 1970s (Britain), 1980s and 1990s (USA) exploring the influence of the DIY ethic. The reference is useful in exemplifying the complexity yet significance of punk community, but is limited in its critical engagement with the theory. In contrast, my

own research engages with the concept in a small scale, in-depth, contemporary context and explores how 'imagined community' may help to develop understanding of DIY punk action, interaction, identity and belonging (see 5.2).

The concept of 'imagined community' was developed by Anderson (1991) to describe nations as socially constructed through the establishment of symbolic boundaries (Anderson, 1991; Griffin, 2012; Hall, 1995; Rose, 1997). The concept has been applied in many different contexts to describe social groupings with common identities, interests, and practices. Recent examples include conceptualising Twitter as an imagined community (Gruzd et al., 2011), exploring international imagined academic communities (Guerin & Green, 2013) and the analysis of imagined community construction by prisoners in online blogs (Dedaic, 2013). Paasi (2002, p.805) asserts that *'most social collectives ... are identified as imagined communities where spatial boundaries may be important constituents ... but, besides 'imagination', these collectives exist firmly in social practice'*. Thus, Paasi (2002) illustrates the concept's wide application and emphasises the significance of social practice and interaction, rather than spatial boundaries, in understanding how such communities develop.

While recognising the significance of the local level and individuality of scenes, punk music, ideologies, identities, and interactions cross spatial boundaries. DIY punk scenes do not exist within one specific location or have fixed boundaries (Griffin, 2012), so they could be conceptualised as an 'imagined community' or 'imagined communities'. Youth cultures<sup>14</sup> can transcend local, regional and

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<sup>14</sup> Though used here, the use of the term 'youth culture' can be problematic, particularly when discussing punk. As O'Conner (2010, p.1) states: 'How can we continue to write about "youth subculture" when older participants (Malcolm McLaren, Ian MacKaye, Jello Biafra, Kathleen Hanna) play key roles in shaping the scene?' Here O'Connor acknowledges the varied age range of those in punk communities. A focus on 'youth' culture rather than subculture risks underestimating the punk movement by ignoring its older membership, and ultimately limiting understanding of music's relationship with society (Bennett, 2006; Herrmann, 2012; Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Another concern with the use of 'youth' is that referring to punk as a 'youth culture' seems to undermine punk as a social phenomenon, reifying the idea that punk (or interest in subcultural activity in general) is something one grows out of.

national boundaries as 'mobile communities', in Epstein's (1998) analysis, which asserts the significance of collectivity beyond place. Culton & Holtzman's (2010) Long Island case study illustrated how local punk scenes are connected to a broader international punk community. This is supported by Ambrosch's (2011) analysis of song lyrics, making connections between the lyrics of punk bands from different places around the world. Connections between, and across, places are also made through bands on tour. Punk studies have revealed how punk 'community' interaction has been boosted by technological developments, with interaction increasingly occurring in virtual space (such as internet message boards, email and social media sites) (Griffin, 2012; Moran, 2010; Mullaney, 2007). The community can at all other times be imagined and occupy no distinct physical space, but then coalesce into physical spaces at shows and other DIY punk events (Griffin, 2012).

The DIY ethic provides *'a foundation for the creation of 'imagined [punk] communities' created through taste and aesthetic choice'* (Moore & Roberts, 2009, p.288). Similar to the notion of 'communities of interest' (Baym, 2007; Cantador & Castells, 2011; Means & Evans, 2012), DIY punk community is linked to participants' mutual enthusiasms and passions. However, these enthusiasms are complex and diverse in the context of DIY punk and, as discussed (2.2 and 2.3). DIY punk may be bounded through collective politics, praxis, and identity in complex and fluid ways. The analysis of the literature, therefore, suggests that participant engagements with DIY punk and with other participants go beyond collective interest.

The concept of 'imagined community' can describe the creation and articulation of boundaries around culture, used to establish who belongs and who does not (Hall, 1995; Rose, 1997). Such a concept seems particularly pertinent in a punk context, where participants position punk culture and identities in relation to (generally in opposition to) mainstream culture (Cherry, 2006; Culton & Holtzman 2010; Haenfler, 2004a; 2004b; 2006; Moore & Roberts, 2009; Mullaney, 2007;

O'Hara, 1999). Collective identity can explain how social movement networks (especially diffuse movements) transform their members into political actors and how they maintain strength over time and space (Haenfler, 2004a; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Taylor & Whittier, 1999). Thus, collective identity is explored through this research (see 4.3 and 5.4). It has been understood as a 'definition system' by McCaughey and Ayers (2003), which is collective and interactive, whereby members of a movement situate themselves in relation to others within larger and more dominant belief systems. It is gained through interactive and ongoing processes of: i) boundary making, where members mark out how they differ from other belief systems and identities, ii) shared or collective consciousness of beliefs, attitudes and interests (see 2.2), and iii) negotiations, whereby members negotiate new ways of thinking, being and doing according to the movement (see 2.2.1) (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Taylor and Whittier, 1999). Haenfler (2004a) explains that the straight edge punk, he studied at length, remains coherent as a movement, despite its lack of formal structure, through collective identity. Processes of cultural production, creative avenues (such as song lyrics and punk publications) and cultural symbols (such as participants marking their hands with an 'X' to show their straight edge identity)<sup>15</sup> forge collective identity in this diffuse movement. The processes of collective identity formation, seen in DIY ethics and practices, may support the notion of imagined punk community.

While recognising literature that poses DIY punk as a global phenomenon, care must be taken to avoid assumptions about punk cultural hybridity. It has been suggested that the over-simplification of music scenes with generalised notions of global flows of communication, media, people, sounds and ideas, undermine

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<sup>15</sup>The universally recognised cultural symbol for straight edge (or sXe) of the 'X' is said to have originated in the early 1980s when some of those over the age of being able to buy alcohol would draw 'X's on their hand in solidarity with those under-age at shows where those under-age would be marked with 'x's when entering the building to show that they were not allowed to buy alcohol at the bar (Haenfler, 2004b; Lahickey, 1997). As Haenfler (2004b, p415) explains: '*Soon, the kids intentionally marked their own hands both to signal club workers of their intention not to drink and, more importantly, to make a statement of pride and defiance to other kids at the shows.*' Now the drawing of Xs on hands can be seen as a representation of a commitment to a straight edge lifestyle and the rejection of various aspects of mainstream society, which the movement sees as negative.

the importance of the work that takes place at the 'local scene',

*The term 'scene' is used here in the same way it is used by punks. A scene is something that takes work to create. It requires local bands that need places to live, practice spaces and venues to play. To do this within the punk ethic of low-cost and preferably all-ages shows requires hard work, ingenuity and local contacts... A scene also needs infrastructure such as record stores, recording studios, independent labels, fanzines and ideally a non-profit-making community space... It is this emphasis on practice and struggle that is lacking in most academic theories of postmodern hybridity. (O'Connor, 2002, p.233)*

Certain social networks and physical infrastructure are required to enable local scenes to exist, grow and thrive<sup>16</sup> (Moran, 2010; O'Connor, 2002), as well as different and overlapping 'scenes', based on music genre and/or political collective consciousness (such as hardcore, queercore and anarcho-punk scenes). Place is significant in understanding local DIY punk scenes, O'Connor (2002) for example, found the punk scene in Washington DC was different to the scene in Mexico City, and there are inevitably places where there may be an absence of an identifiable punk scene altogether. It is, therefore, not as simple as local scenes connected to a wider community, but there is limited literature exploring the complexity of these relationships. My study addresses this, in understanding that community in a punk context requires recognition of complex relationships between virtual, imagined and physical space and place (see 5.2).

The limitations of the notion of a punk community are highlighted by O'Connor (2008, p.3) *'Nobody talks about "community" without putting that word in quotes. It is simply too spread out that the idea of a face-to-face community is unconvincing.'* I recognise O'Connor's (2008) argument that punk is too diverse

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<sup>16</sup>As well as networks supporting local scenes, networks across scene boundaries are needed to support DIY punk's continuation. Seattle band map is a useful pictorial representation of how musical projects and collaborations are connected in the North West USA. The site describes the map as,

*A project that showcases the northwest's vibrant music scene by documenting the thousands of bands who have performed throughout the decades; it also explores how these bands are interconnected through personal relationships and collaborations. ([www.seattlebandmap.com](http://www.seattlebandmap.com)).*

The connections are based on when bands share members or when artists have collaborated together on projects. The Seattle Band Map helps to illustrate how social networks develop through involvement in music performance, touring and collaboration.

and dispersed to be convincingly regarded as one coherent community. Yet, community remains a term used by punks, along with scene, to describe DIY punk, and their relationship with it and with others through it. Networks are vital to understanding DIY punk but not just practical connections, bonds and trust between participants are critical (Crossley, 2008; Moran, 2010). This thesis explores community as a useful concept, considering DIY punks' networks of strong bonds, collective identity and collective consciousness (see Chapter 5). Key intriguing factors, associated with the study of punk, are interconnectedness and mobilisation, where inter-regional and international and historical ties can be perceived. So the application of the concept of imagined communities to DIY punk is explored through this research (see 5.2.1).

A geographical perspective considers the importance of place. Assumptions of homogeneity are questioned, while an ever-present sense of global community across punk scenes is acknowledged. From Massey's (1998) geographical perspective, 'youth cultures' are neither 'closed local cultures' nor 'undifferentiatedly global cultures', they are, rather, more complex 'products of interaction'. DIY punk subcultural production may, in Massey's (1998) sense, involve the 'carving out' of local spaces in participants' own local vision and for themselves, yet remaining interconnected with other spaces and (youth) cultures in different localities around the world. Similarly, research by geographers, Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.467), found the political practices of the autonomous activists in their study to be '*neither locally bounded nor easily transferable to the transnational.*' Such an analysis complements post-subcultural critiques of homogeneity in subcultural identities with a sense of global connectedness, which can be felt through virtual and physical social interactions and is therefore applicable to DIY punk. In practice, however, utilisation of the post-structural critiques of earlier subcultural studies, exploration of the connectedness of punk as imagined communities, together with maintenance of a sensitivity to place and locality, remain undeveloped in the literature. As a result, this research develops a framework for the study of DIY punk as both imagined and global with local, place, and scene specificities (5.2.2).

## **2.4 Literature review conclusions and research themes**

Scholarship illustrating the fluid nature of activism and the presence of resistance in non-formal political, or cultural, arenas, as well as the debates around the nature of subcultural action, production and identity, frame DIY punk as a fertile yet contentious and under-theorised area of study. Through the presence of symbolic as well as formal organised political actions, DIY punk can provide examples of action that are not solely cultural or political (Moore & Roberts, 2009). Regarding DIY punk participation as activism, with both cultural and political elements, is consistent with the notion of 'multi-layered' (Haenfler, 2004b) or 'multi-scalar' (Ettlinger, 2011) resistance and also as prefigurative cultural production (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009). Bourdieu's concept of 'fields of cultural production' is also helpful in acknowledging the complexity and fluidity of cultural phenomena, shifting the focus of this research from what DIY punk *is*, to look at activist tactics and everyday resistances in the context of DIY punk cultural production, social interaction, motives and mobilisations in a small scale study to better capture the complexities and nuances of DIY punk culture. Tactics and resistance may include 'political activity' in more traditional senses, such as awareness raising, skill sharing, confrontational political messages in music, as well as political, cultural and symbolic resistance, relating to Foucault's contention that resistance is multi-scalar and inter-relational. Evidence of the benefits and pitfalls of the theoretical discussions raised in this review are discussed in my analysis chapters.

Literature on DIY punk subcultural practice has illustrated the complexities of participants implementing DIY ethics in practice. There are implicit expectations of engagement with certain political ideologies within punk spaces, and expectations of inclusivity. However, exclusive practices and disparities in collective consciousness illustrate the limitations of these expectations. The literature suggests that ethics and collective consciousness are vital to DIY punk

as a diffuse movement, and so the connections between DIY ethics and disparities, in ethics and between ethics and practice, are explored in my analysis.

I reviewed literature that engages with tensions and contradictions in DIY punk culture and activist burn-out. This research suggests that considering burn-out within DIY punk participation may illuminate some of the effects of participants negotiating the conflicts and dilemmas, which occur in putting DIY ethics into practice, and illustrate the limitations of sell-out rhetoric. In light of concerns about burn-out and discussions about inequalities and contradictions in punk ethics and practice, tensions between participants' desires to discourage 'selling-out', versus concerns over exclusivity and burning-out, are explored in my analysis (see Chapter 6).

Developments in (sub)cultural studies and social movement theory illustrate difficulties in defining boundaries around dominant culture and subculture, as the boundaries are fluid. Responding to criticism of terminological debates in subcultural studies (Furness, 2012), this thesis attempts to look at the connections between DIY punk participants in collective organising, collective consciousness, and collective identity, while acknowledging diversity, multiplicity and identity fluidity. Recognising the notion of community as key to DIY punk participation, this thesis builds on the concept of 'imagined community', providing a concept of 'imagined communities' that is appropriate for the study of DIY punk. It is mindful of the diversity and complexity of DIY punk scenes, identities, resistances and ideologies, while acknowledging its boundedness and the significance of place.

From the debates outlined in the literature review, the following research questions have been identified to help to answer the overarching research question:

To what extent can attempts to realise DIY ethics through DIY punk participation



be understood as activism, and what tactics are employed by participants in the creation of DIY punk culture?

#### Sub-questions

1. How do DIY punks define, express and negotiate DIY ethics?
2. What does community mean in a DIY punk context and what role do community, networks and relationships play in DIY punk cultural production?
3. How do participants negotiate the problematics that they encounter in their cultural production and what do these negotiations tell us about the potentialities of DIY cultural production as activism?

These sub-questions are answered through each of the three analysis chapters- 4, 5 and 6 (with the first sub-question answered through the first analysis chapter 4, and so on), but themes throughout all the analysis chapters contribute to answering the sub-questions and the over-arching research question.

The diffusion, fluidity and variation within punk, illustrated by post-subcultural theorists, challenge the possibility for generalisability in the study of punk and the necessity of recognising place and scene specificities, when discussing cross-cultural connections. These debates suggest the potential for in-depth small scale research to understand DIY punk participation, cultural production, participant interactions and identities, and the importance of place. Much of the research investigating punk subcultures and youth cultures has failed to fully capture the meanings, motivations and actions of subcultural participants, because it has lacked ethnographic grounding (Furness, 2012; Moore, 2007). As Moore (2007, p.442) highlighted '*scholars have typically based their conclusions on their own interpretations of the sounds and styles, treating them as semiotic "texts".*' Such critiques inform my interpretivist and ethnographic approach, discussed in the following chapter, which explains how the research questions were translated into methods, through an epistemological and methodological discussion.

### 3.0 Methodology

*'Research can be a tricky, fascinating, awkward, tedious, annoying, hilarious, confusing, disturbing, mechanical, sociable, isolating, surprising, sweaty, messy, systematic, costly, draining, iterative, contradictory, open-ended process'. (Atkinson et al., 2007, p.16)*

The previous chapter identified the issues arising from theory and previous research on DIY, activism, punk and subcultures, and developed the research themes that my study addresses. Alongside my review of the subject specific and methodological literature, I was informed by my prior involvement with DIY punk; I continued to develop my research focus and themes through participation and reflection throughout the research process. Drawing from lessons learned from the literature, and from what emerged with participation and observation, I gradually developed the most pressing questions to progress my investigation. This chapter demonstrates how an ethnographic approach, which allows flexibility and utilises the iterative nature of research, was the most appropriate for my own study. First, I explain my epistemological perspective, followed by an outline of the methods used to collect data. I then discuss ethnography, an approach with a long tradition in social research, which seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena from rich data. I explain how auto-ethnography has aided my data collection and analysis and explain why I decided to use '(auto)ethnography' to describe my approach, as my ethnographic methods are informed by the auto, but are not wholly auto-ethnographic. I identify some of the criticisms of auto-ethnography and ethnography and explain how my own approach attempted to address them. I then unpick my positionality as key to my approach, given my familiarity and relationship with the topic. This is followed by a consideration of the ethical issues that arose from my research design and how I responded to them. Finally, I explain my approach to data analysis.

### 3.1 Epistemology and research paradigm

My research approach is informed by social constructionist and interpretivist epistemologies (Letherby, 2003), which help to translate the Foucauldian and post-structural theories, drawn on in my literature review, into a workable methodology. Using this epistemological starting point, these methods were not intended to uncover facts or truth, but to obtain a deep understanding of how societal constructs shape our reality (Mertens, 1998). I utilised aspects of interpretivist, social constructionist and feminist research methods and in so doing, I sought to ensure that, as far as possible, the narratives of those involved are heard and represented well. I applied the concept of reflexivity and the need for respect and reciprocity between the researcher and the respondents, as active participants in the project. Research is best viewed as a *process*; a process that is not linear and without, necessarily, clear and defined stages (Whatmore, 2003). What follows contextualises the data gathering part of my own research journey, recognising the importance of this part of the research process, but also the fluidity of this 'phase' in relation to the rest of the project-formulation, analysis and write-up (Whatmore, 2003).

The central tenet of much of Foucault's work on power was the concept of 'power-knowledge'. Knowledge and power are always intertwined, and the relationship of power-knowledge forms discourse. Using this notion, he questioned the idea that power is always, or predominantly, repressive; it is also productive. Knowledge is a '*technique of power*' (Manias & Street, 2000 p.53) as knowledge produces and reifies 'truths', and when knowledge alters, so does power. This suggests that subject positions, relationships between people, are discursively produced through social interaction. And so, the way individual subjects act (or perform, in Butler's (1990) sense) is determined by discourse. So, Foucault's work teaches us to analyse the discursive and productive nature of power, so that we can examine how discourse works and the impact that discourse has, rather than what discourse says (Bannister, 2010).

Foucault's concept of the constituted, rather than the active, subject illustrates

the development and complexity of agency. Foucault (1980) asserted that the subject was always an effect of power-knowledge, which challenges the conception of the subject as active. Manias and Street (2000) explain that the concept of subjects as always constituted is the product of Foucault's framework, which places us all (as subjects) as effects 'of practices', or discursively produced. This could be problematic as it may suggest that there is no potential for the manipulation of subject position within discourse (Manias & Street, 2000). Despite the strong influence of power-knowledge that limits the options available, for Weedon (1992), subjects do have the potential to make choices, within the limited scope or framework of discourses that produce power-knowledge. Also, although Foucault's (1978) early work may have limited the 'active' subject, his later work (Foucault, 1998) discussed the potential for active constitution and the potential role of self-constitution by the subject. Society is characterised by disciplinary power that is multi-dimensional and multi-scalar. Foucault's related theory of 'governmentality' explains how 'disciplinary society' constrains agency, as people internalise social rules through the mode of discourse. McLaren (2009) highlights the limits of a Foucauldian approach to social research, warning that we cannot rely on Foucault alone in analysis, due to his lack of clarity and structure in how to ground his theories into practice. Therefore, I drew upon social constructionist and interpretivist epistemologies to produce an approach that utilises the lessons learned from Foucauldian and post-structural critiques, which recognises and problematises subjectivity and truth, but offers practical solutions for research.

Developments in subcultural studies show us that subcultural collectivity and participation should be regarded as fragmented, fluid, and unbounded, and that participants can inhabit multiple identities, in relation to subculture and beyond it. 'Post-subcultural' critiques reject 'essentialism' within subcultural studies (2.3), instead they are in favour of acknowledging the fragmented and sometimes contradictory nature of identities (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Muggleton, 2005). Hence, my research required an anti-essentialist approach. A social constructionist paradigm questions objective facts and perceives knowledge as

fundamentally contested. But, when it is combined with elements of critical realism, it is possible to carry out research with such a critical view of reality (Burr 1998). In the construction of reality there lie opportunities for resistance through alternative constructions, and so a social constructionist framework is useful for the study of activism and resistance.

Social constructionism allows the exploration of meanings that people use in social interactions, which create the social world through inter-subjective processes (Burr, 1998). Meanings are not always shared by individuals engaged in interactions, through the many and complex layers of social life. So my research was designed to elicit rich data and uncover layers of meanings, shared and contested by participants. With this in mind, I recognised that my 'insider' experience did not mean that I could speak on behalf of all punk or DIY, as the cultural field of DIY is huge and varied. Similarly, I did not assume that my participants could be 'spokes-people' for others. I attempt to write 'with' rather than 'about' DIY activism, to avoid issues of misrepresentation and essentialism when reporting participant and personal experiences and analysis (Sultana, 2007). The researcher, even as an 'insider', can still only produce their own narrative. Though there are benefits to be yielded from 'insider' research by 'fans'/participants, Attfield (2011) warns against claiming or assuming these accounts are therefore 'authentic'. The notion of the 'authentic' account implies that other accounts of a similar topic would therefore be 'inauthentic' or less authentic, which is narrow and exclusionary. Instead, Attfield (2011) recommends that researchers recognise the bias of their position and their individual situation, without claiming that these factors make their accounts more *real* than another.

Further, research is a non-linear *process*. A flexible ethnographic approach is appropriate, to allow for the shaping, reshaping, moving on and returning that occurs during the research process, and that recognises the importance of 'encounters' in research (McLaren, 2009; Whatmore, 2003). Ethnography is a methodological approach associated with the researcher spending enough time

as a participant in a community, to develop an understanding of its complex social and cultural phenomena and shared meanings. It is not intended to find causal relationships and correlations between variables, of the sort that can be generalised to other situations. Ethnography, as both a process and a product of research, conveys the complexity and uniqueness of individuals and their relationships. The uniqueness of my field of enquiry, its historic and place specific contexts and relationships between individuals, mean that my findings and analysis may not be generalisable or replicable by other researchers. Still, the concepts and approaches used can be developed in other studies and applied more widely.

My ethnographic approach, situated within a social constructionist theoretical framework, suits the specificities of my research project. My efforts to understand the richness of DIY culture and politics, and power and resistance as multi-scalar, multi-directional and produced, required a flexible approach that could respond to those complexities. The approach had to recognise the multiplicity of experience, the contingency of subject positions, and the unpredictability of the research process.

### **3.2 Research Procedures, *A multi-method approach***

Due to the broad and contested nature of the topic in question, the theoretical framework that this research is situated in, and my personal history and relationship with the topic, a multi-method ethnographic approach was the most appropriate. '*Ethnography is about telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story*' (Fetterman, 2010, p.1), so my approach included participant observations, interviews and casual conversations, along with personal (auto-ethnographic) reflections. With the acceptance that the results of this research would not necessarily be generalisable, as this was not the main aim of the research, an approach that looked in relative depth at examples of cultural producers, and specific activities and spaces that are central to DIY punk in the North East, was the most appropriate to my theoretical framework. The benefits and pitfalls are

considered in 3.3, in this section I discuss the practical application of my methods.

My approach recognised and harnessed the iterative nature of qualitative research to lead to stronger and deeper data analysis (Whatmore, 2003). It was influenced by grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), resting on the notion that theory should emerge through the progress of a study. This is in contrast to hypothesis-based social research, where hypotheses shape research findings. Grounded theory is anti-deterministic and recognises the possibility of change, emphasising that the social phenomena that we research are never static and so this should be reflected in method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Grounded research, therefore, should be open and allow flexibility in the development of the theories that emerge. Though grounded theory, or a wholly iterative approach, is not always practical in field research (due to time constraints especially), my research was influenced by this approach, in that it recognised the importance of the research *process* and deliberately allowed for the development of theory through the research. This accounts for my choice of research themes rather than hypotheses. It was appropriate to allow a certain level of flexibility in data collection and analysis, to avoid past experiences and the personal assumptions that have grown from these, to influence the initial research questions. I wanted to discover what was important to the individuals and what actions and experiences they felt were important. Thus, I allowed myself to be guided by my research process, feeling confident doing so because of my experiences, knowledge, relationships and feelings towards the 'field' in question.

### **3.2.1 The use of (auto)ethnography**

This research is small scale with a focus on the everyday; yet it is a multi-layered project, intersecting experiences of power and resistance, all within the complex and fertile research landscape of DIY punk cultural production, resistance and activism. Since the criticisms of early writers associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (outlined in 2.3.1), there has been an 'ethnographic turn' in the study of subcultures (Hodkinson, 2005),

reflecting the need to understand the lived experiences and motivations of subcultural participants. This has been rooted in ethnography (Furness, 2012). Gathering data using an ethnographic approach offers the opportunity for in-depth data collection, rather than attempting to provide a generalisable sample.

Ethnography involves studying people in the context of their own locales, focusing on the everyday patterns and behaviours of social life (Bryman, 2011; Fetterman, 2010). Ethnography is personal and intimate. It uses observation and interviews to go beyond individual accounts to explore relational aspects and the contexts in which they unfold (Hall, 2011). Consequently, it seemed clear that an ethnographic approach would be most appropriate for my research, as I wanted to explore how people define their relationship to DIY, whether/how they perceive it as activism, why it is important to them and how this translates into actions.

I use (auto)ethnography, in a similar way to Downes' (2010) use of 'auto/ethnography', to denote my close, personal history and relationship with the subject matter; I have drawn upon my own subjective experiences in my research design, procedures and analysis, but my approach is not wholly auto-ethnographic. As discussed further in 3.3.1, auto-ethnography differs from more traditional ethnography in its attention to self-reflection by the researcher, and in placing the researcher within the research (Chan, 2008). In the context of this project, I reflected on my experiences as an active participant in the social phenomena that I researched; I used observations, conversations and interviews, typically found in ethnography, but also included personal experiences and reflections as part of the data collection. This involved seeing myself as a participant in the research. So, for example, I used experiences of playing in a band or organising a show to support the findings of my observations and interviews, but my experiences were not at the centre of the data collection and analysis. Therefore, my approach to ethnography was informed and influenced by the 'auto', rather than being wholly auto-ethnographic.



The (auto)ethnographic data collection methods I used were:

1. Semi-structured interviews (10 participants, lasting approximately 1.5 hours each)
2. Participant observations and (auto)ethnographic reflections (approx. 150 hours)
3. Conversations as part of fieldwork observations. These informal conversations influenced my fieldwork notes and the focusing of the project, along with observations and interview data
4. Research diary used to reflect on the research process throughout

My multi-method approach required careful organisation and continuous cross-referencing of the data collected via the different methods. I therefore kept a reflexive research diary, alongside my fieldwork notes and interview notes and transcriptions. I used this diary to document the *process* of the research, identifying any emerging themes, complications encountered, new avenues for exploration, and personal feelings and concerns. This was useful in terms of data collection, analysis, and it facilitated reflection during the process of data gathering and further reflection at different stages of the research. For Punch (2010, p.1) the potential benefits from keeping a reflexive research diary include recording '*practical difficulties, emotional and intellectual concerns, and feelings of cultural and academic guilt*'. The diary helped me to work through some of the anxieties and dilemmas that come with doing 'intimate insider' or reflexive research, discussed further in 3.3.3.

### **3.2.2 Observations**

The observations took place in a variety of settings, predominantly live music events, but also other DIY based cultural events, including art shows, film nights and poetry events and a café run on cooperative, non-commercial principles (see 3.2.4 for more detail about observation sites). The observations were used to gather data, as well as to identify participants for interviews, recording observations, conversations and personal reflections during or soon after

observations in field note-books, for later analysis (Chan, 2008). To strengthen reliability, I used systematic recording, noting detailed observations as soon as possible, in the research setting and/or soon afterwards (Schweingruber & McPhail, 1999). I also recorded reflections about the overall process of the research, as a tool with a wider scope for development, in the research diary.

In conducting participant observation at each event, I took note of: the demographic characteristics of the band members, promoters and the audience, the price of entry and the price of merchandise available. I noted what, if any, other stalls (information or sales) were present, who was organising and how the event was run (including, who was responsible for sound equipment, who was 'on the door', who was coordinating bands), what kind of space was used and how, what the nature of the interactions between participants were (such as between the bands and the crowd) and what was said by those with the microphone. Taking note of each of these factors, along with other significant and noteworthy features of individual events, helped to recreate a picture of the event later and provided opportunities to identify themes and make comparisons between events.

Auto-ethnographic observations are similar to participant observation, but with a focus on the researcher. This was appropriate and useful because of my previous involvement in the arena of my study. Observation (that includes listening) is appropriate for the investigation of what people think and say about a particular topic, how they behave and why (Cloke et al., 2004). The auto-ethnographic elements of my research involved my experiences as an active participant in the field, and reflections on my role in the research process. This facilitated reflection on less concrete aspects of shows, such as 'atmosphere', which would be difficult to capture after the event, in interview style discussions with other participants. It also allowed me to reflect on my experiences of organising shows and performing, to test and support data from other observations and interviews. My participant observations and auto-ethnographic reflections have proved

invaluable as a method of data collection for this project; they have allowed me to explore, revisit and critically review examples of what those involved in DIY punk actually do (Furness, 2012). Also, following a feminist epistemology, observation benefits from the 'embeddedness' of the researcher, necessary in the forming of genuine trust, rapport and understanding (Kitchen & Tate, 2000).

### **3.2.3 Interviews**

I carried out ten semi-structured interviews, alongside my observations, using a qualitative technique that can elicit rich data for greater depth and understanding (Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Robson, 2002). Interviews can provide a more thorough examination of individuals' experiences, feelings and opinions than can be gathered by quantitative methods of data collection (Kitchen & Tate, 2000). As one of my aims was to explore how individuals feel about their (DIY) resistance, and how the examples of resistance discussed may be multi-layered, it was important to have detailed discussions with participants.

The interviews were semi-structured, as strictly structured interviews could have limited the depth of exploration. The interview techniques used were informed by feminist research, which proposes reflexivity, respect and reciprocity between researcher and respondents. So interviews were conducted in places chosen by, and convenient and comfortable for, the participants, and participants were assured that they could withdraw from or end the interview at any time. The semi-structured nature of my interviews permitted conversational flow and freedom for the interviewee to lead the discussion to a degree, to identify what was important to them and to allow their personal roles and experiences to be explored. This approach to interviewing, along with informal conversations with DIY punk participants about my research, enabled me to explore how the topics that I had identified as significant through literature analysis, resonated with the participants. Though I did use a framework of conversational prompts, I heeded the advice of Kitchen and Tate (2000). They emphasised the importance of personalising questions, listening carefully and referring back to previous

answers given, for clarification and direction; so the interview guide was deliberately open and flexible.

#### **3.2.4 Access and Sampling: who, where and when?**

The boundaries of my research lie within the North East of England, geographically, and within the realms of where DIY and punk intersect. Yet, as discussed in my review of the literature, pinning down a definition for phenomena like 'DIY', 'DIY culture' and 'DIY punk' is difficult. I perceive DIY punk as amorphous, diverse and dynamic social phenomenon that is constantly in flux. In its nature, punk defies a clear definition, which makes mapping out the boundaries of my data collection and the 'object' of my research difficult (see Downes et. al., 2013). Also, as exemplified by the ongoing debates about what counts as 'punk' and 'DIY' within and beyond academia, these are contested terms and can have multiple meanings at the same time. So, the context of this study was predominantly the North East of England, though not all of the experiences discussed by participants took place there (as participants referred to other places they have visited or lived), and many of the bands were based elsewhere, but were passing through on tour. Also, although the research has been based in the North East, the use of snowball sampling meant following connections between people, bands and events, which has taken me beyond the region on occasion. This reflected the nature of my research topic and literature reviewed earlier, which regards DIY punk as a fluid and unbounded community or communities. This situated, yet fluid, approach is important in framing my analysis.

I used purposive and snowball sampling. My initial interview participants were asked to participate because of their involvement in DIY punk. This was similar to how Nicholas' (2005) research on anarchy-punk 'zines, ensured the 'variable of interest' was a topic participants could talk about. I also used snowball sampling, which involved approaching and interviewing people that my participants suggested, as well as taking opportunities to talk to people visiting or

touring during my data collection. Also, two participants asked if they could be involved after hearing about my research. Observations primarily took place in live music event venues, these varied from pubs to bars, community centres, social clubs and houses. As a participant in DIY punk culture, I was well placed to access information about events where it might be appropriate to conduct my research. I used online social networking sites to find out about DIY punk shows in the area (mainly Facebook and Tumblr). I also heard about events through 'word of mouth', by looking out for flyers for events in local venues and coffee shops, by checking venue websites, and by using local event calendars.

The interview participants were selected on the basis of their active involvement in the DIY punk scene<sup>17</sup>. Their involvement included promoters, band members, people who run labels and/or 'distros'<sup>18</sup>, people who do or have been involved in a combination of these things, and other DIY punk participants. I asked each interviewee for suggestions of others to speak to and the reasons for their suggestions, to utilise the snowball sampling method (as explained above). As highlighted in 2.2 and 2.3, it is difficult to define exactly what counts as 'punk'; there is diversity within the punk genre and also close connections that can be seen between punk and other social phenomena. I chose to look at shows that seemed to rely on DIY ethics, or advertised themselves as DIY and not to focus on a particular genre (like hardcore punk, folk punk, pop-punk and overlap with indie-pop). To overcome the definitional challenge, I spoke to individuals about my research, asked if they would be interested in being involved and asked each interviewee what DIY (and DIY punk) meant to them. I also, particularly but not exclusively, aimed to capture the voices of women, because of their frequent absence from literature about punk and music subcultures more generally. For this reason, there is a relatively even gender representation in the interview

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<sup>17</sup> Here I use 'scene' to refer to a broad 'North East' DIY/punk scene, which incorporates different genres of music, for example; hardcore punk, pop-punk, folk-punk, indie, indie-pop and power-pop, but refers to a scene or scenes which espouse a commitment to DIY. There was substantial variety in how participants identified with the term 'scene' and where they saw the boundaries of their 'scene' were, if any boundaries were acknowledged.

<sup>18</sup> A distro (short for distribution) is a term used to describe the selling of DIY music, merchandise and/or fan zines, usually displayed as a stall at gigs and sold online.

participants, though this may not reflect the participation in the 'scene/s' as a whole. In total, I carried out ten formal semi-structured interviews. I had initially planned to interview 10-15 participants but, along with my other ethnographic data, once I had carried out ten interviews I had amassed a huge amount of data to work with. After my tenth interview, I supported my findings with discussions and observations.

I originally asked each participant to introduce themselves through a written 'participant biography', to elicit more accurate demographic and identity information about participants. This was to allow them to set the context for the reader of who they are and what they think is significant about themselves, in the context of their relationship to DIY. However, the biographies gathered included information that jeopardised confidentiality and anonymity of participants (see 3.3.4). So the biographies have not been included in the thesis, but were used along with my other data for analysis. At the time of interview<sup>19</sup>, three participants identified themselves as men, six identified as women and one as gender-queer<sup>20</sup>. Ages ranged from eighteen to thirty four years; nine of the ten participants were white and one had mixed ethnicity. Outside of their involvement in DIY punk<sup>21</sup>, one participant was unemployed, one was a student at further education college, two were undergraduate students (one of whom also worked in a restaurant part time), one was a PhD student, one was a teaching assistant, two worked as café assistants, and one was a care worker.

I mapped out a period of data collection where I identified thirty four shows in five months to attend and observe. Twenty four shows were in the North East and ten took place elsewhere in the UK (three in Leeds and the rest in Sheffield, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, London, Bristol and Brighton). However, the shows I

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<sup>19</sup> Demographic information is subject to change, so this information relates to the time of the interview.

<sup>20</sup> Not identifying with a conventional binary gender identity, identifying neither as male or female. As Bessa identified as gender-queer I use the pronouns 'they', 'them' and 'their' when referring to them.

<sup>21</sup> Chris Clavin manages his label and plays and tours in bands full time.

attended and performed in, before and after this period (again, across the UK) also contributed to my project development, idea construction and analysis. The venues were eight bar/public houses, two cafes, two houses, three DIY social centres and one collectively run DIY art space/venue (some venues held multiple events). I also attended three DIY art shows held in a university building and two cafes during the five months.

### **3.3 Methodological considerations**

In this section I discuss further the application of my (auto)ethnographic approach, specifically addressing the benefits and limitations, given my familiarity and insider position. I include a critique of the notion of 'insider' research that developed through my fluctuating feelings and experiences of 'insiderness'. I then discuss ethical considerations in detail, before considering my approach to data analysis.

#### **3.3.1 Why (auto)ethnography? Combining 'insider', ethnographic, reflexive and iterative research techniques**

Auto-ethnography can be understood as the process of inter-relating fieldwork findings with the analysis of personal experiences, in a '*combination of analysis and self-observation*' (Attfield, 2011, p.3). The approach recognises the researcher's limits and the embodied and experiential nature of the 'data gathering' elements of research, rather than seeking and claiming objectivity and detachment. As a participant in DIY punk subculture, I recognise how my position might have an impact in the process of my research. Taking advice, from researchers who have used auto-ethnographic methods, allowed me to acknowledge the importance of my own interest in and personal history of DIY culture and punk, and also enabled me to reflect on my experiences during the research. For Spry (2001, p.706), an auto-ethnographic approach can help here by encouraging the consciousness of, and critical engagement with, how we '*... "I-witness" our own reality constructions*'. It is particularly crucial to consider the

subjectivity of perception when carrying out research as a participant in the arena of study. The potential benefits of an auto-ethnographic approach to research, on punk particularly, have been described by Attfield (2011). When carried out by a researcher with an already established involvement or history with the genre; fan or participant, writing can provide *'an insight into the 'full depth and breadth' ... of life and bridges the gap between lived experience and academic culture'* (Attfield, 2011, p.3).

There are issues associated with the use of auto-ethnography as a data-gathering and analysis tool. One concern, raised in the literature, is the risk of self-indulgence when trying to balance analytical self-reflection with too much focus on the researcher (Chan, 2008; Attfield, 2011). Hence, Delamont (2009) dismisses auto-ethnographic approaches altogether, on the basis of 'navel-gazing', self-obsession and narcissism supposedly inherent in auto-ethnographic accounts. Other critics include Atkinson (2006), who maintains that auto-ethnography privileges experience at the expense of analysis, while Anderson (2006) argues that auto-ethnography unjustifiably *claims* to be research, but the topic of study is only the researcher themselves. Such critiques deny the potential of auto-ethnography, which can position the researcher within the research, or even put them at the centre, but utilises personal experiences, knowledge and position to reflexively study a topic or situation, rather than the researcher themselves (Denzin, 2006). So, for this project, auto-ethnography involves turning the spotlight on me as a researcher, to develop a better understanding of myself in relation to my research, to strengthen my findings, rather than the research goal being an attempt to understand myself.

A problem with the approach taken by writers, such as Delamont (2009), Anderson (2006) and Atkinson (2006), is that they draw the boundaries of auto-ethnography too narrowly, using only a few examples to evidence the inadequacies of auto-ethnography. They thus risk dismissing auto-ethnography based on *potential* issues, without looking at the specific circumstances and goals



of the research. As Ellis et al. (2011, p11) argue,

*...in a world of (methodological) difference, auto-ethnographers find it futile to debate whether auto-ethnography is a valid research process or product ... Unless we agree on a goal, we cannot agree on the terms by which we can judge how to achieve it.*

Rather than dismissing the method altogether, it is possible to address these potential pitfalls, to avoid or minimise them. As part of a multi-method research project (including, but not limited to, auto-ethnographic observations), my study draws on my position, experiences and observations as a researcher, and on my experiences as a participant, while exploring the experiences of other participants involved in DIY. Here, the 'auto' in auto-ethnography is about recognising the unavoidable reality that I have an embodied, experiential and historical positionality in relation to the 'field'. In the data collection and analysis of this project, I aimed to work with and against this reality, recognising what is already apparent and utilising it. The auto-ethnographic aspects of my research allowed me to reflect on my position, as a participant in the phenomena being investigated. These reflections were particularly helpful in the early stages of data collection and in developing my research themes, rather than my analysis, which predominantly focused on the research participants.

### **3.3.2 Reflexivity as a methodological tool**

The benefits of reflexivity as a methodological tool have become well recognised across social research in recent years, particularly in feminist scholarship. Reflexive research requires the researchers to place themselves within the work; it acknowledges that '*all experiences, texts and ideas are open to multiple interpretations*' (Maxey, 1999, p.199) and it recognises the role of the researcher and respondent in the production of knowledge and development of the process. For Maxey (1999, 2004), reflexivity is necessary to understand and study 'real world concerns', as it does not aim to claim authority for experience. When describing her own experiences, McLaren (2009, p.2) illustrates both the meaning and some of the benefits of being reflexive. She explains that reflexivity

strengthened her analysis by '*... broadening my own discursively formed views by exposing how my constructions and subjective experiences interacted with my research.*' Thus, it is essential that we recognise our own part played in the discourses and social phenomena that we are exploring, to strengthen findings and validity.

Social researchers do not study a passive world. So reflection is required on the process of research itself throughout, for greater understanding of this process, and for deeper analysis. Whatmore (2003) proposes rethinking the research 'stage', regarding research as a process that seeks to contribute to understanding through the creation of 'knowledge events', rather than being about knowledge discovery or uncovering pre-existing 'truths'. This requires recognition of the always limited, partial and iterative nature of the research process. Both Whatmore (2003) and McLaren (2009) support engagement with the unavoidable, such as the unpredictable factors that lie beyond the researcher's control, yet have an impact on the research process. McLaren (2009, p.1) maintains that reflexivity heightened their awareness of '*the 'outer' social, cultural and discursive contexts of the research which strengthened the research findings*'. Consequently, I needed to expose and reflect on my influence on the research process, as 'truth' is not already present and waiting to be discovered; researchers define what they are looking for and choose what they seek (McLaren, 2009).

Given my embeddedness in the field, it was important for me to ensure that I maintained criticality throughout the process of the research. Reflexivity is essential for ethical research (Gregson & Rose, 2000; Sultana, 2007) and can be utilised as a tool to increase the validity of research by regularly critiquing and checking the researcher's positionality and influence on the research (see also following section about reflexively and critically working with my positionality). If we reflect on and try to critically engage with the research processes, then we can better assess its impact and strengthen validity. Reflection throughout the

research process acknowledges the influence of location, sensitivity of the topic, power relations and the social interaction, between the ethnographer and those being researched, and strengthens the validity of the research findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The use of reflexivity strengthened the validity of my research in a number of ways, including ensuring disclosure (that participants understood the research project and were happy to be involved), assessing the potential impact of their involvement and of my findings on the participants, and trying to uncover and reflect on my own impact on the research process. I sought to maintain a level of criticality by actively stepping back from the data to allow time to approach the transcriptions and observation notes with greater neutrality. I chose a reflexive and somewhat open research question to allow the research process to be guided by the themes emerging through literature and fieldwork, rather than setting rigid research aims to begin with, and I endeavoured to stay reflexive about my role and the expectations and influence of others through regular discussions with participants, going back to participants to clarify any uncertainties, and speaking to others within the sub-cultural context, and academic peers (as well as my academic supervisors) with less familiarity with the subject matter at different stages of the research process.

An important aspect of researcher reflectivity is positionality. Next I discuss my own position as an 'insider' and how my position aided my research, but required careful negotiation.

### **3.3.3 Positionality: insider/outsider/academic/activist/punk?**

As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, I have been, what may be considered as, an 'activist' since my childhood. I started with involvement in traditional party politics and formal protest, accompanying my parents. As I grew older I began to become more personally involved in more 'big A' activism, along with more local, small scale, action. I became interested in punk when I was about 14. Involvement in punk, which I have not always perceived as necessarily activist or even, at the beginning of my involvement, as overtly

political, nurtured an engagement with political and social justice causes. This, along with my degree studies (Human Geography and Education), developed my political identity, and particularly my identity as a feminist, as well as an animal rights activist and a punk. It is not possible to isolate a single political identity from my 'social' or 'cultural' or 'professional' identity, so I have attempted to reflect on this throughout my research.

A major aspect of my positionality is my status as an 'insider' researcher. This relates to my own felt position as an 'insider', the perceptions of me as an insider in relation to my participants, and the potential reception of the research by others in the academic field, or by other DIY participants. Drawing on the work of a selection of doctoral students, Hellawell (2006) suggests that students who considered their position on the insider-outsider spectrum (which is not necessarily static) were better able to approach their research reflexively.

'Insider' research, refers to research where a particularly strong level of familiarity exists between the researcher and the subject, group, community, individuals, and/or place being studied. It is also referred to as 'native ethnography' or 'pure observant participation' (Hodkinson, 2005), 'Insider' research has been common in research into DIY (or other radically based) culture and particularly punk. Research on punk is often carried out by current or past punk participants (Attfield, 2011), for example Leblanc's (1999) work on women in punk, Haenfler's (2004a; 2004b; 2006) work on the straight edge movement and Downes' (2008; 2010; 2012) work on Riot Grrrl and queer feminist activism. Complementing arguments that support the use of auto-ethnography for research by punk participants, Hodkinson (2005, p.131) suggests that valuable insight can be offered by researching from an 'insider' position; '*...both [in terms] of the research process and the types of understanding that might be generated*'. As noted earlier (in 2.3.1), a criticism of the earlier subcultural studies research, carried out by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), was its non-'insider' nature. The CCCS '*tended to impose external interpretations upon young*

*people's patterns of behaviour and alignment'* (Hodkinson, 2005, p.140). This indicates the potential benefits of insider research into alternative cultures or subcultures. However, there is a need to be wary of the risks in claiming 'insider' status: that insider status may be used to suggest a more authentic voice and that this authenticity may similarly lead to the imposition of the researcher's interpretations onto the participants studied, imposing one narrative onto another. To some extent this is unavoidable in social research, yet, as highlighted by Hodkinson (2005), utilising a reflexive approach, recognising researcher positionality, and acknowledging the limits of the position of the 'insider', minimises this risk.

'Insider' research can benefit from rapport and trust between the researcher and the participants; but this should not be assumed, especially when considering the impact of the individual's altered role from participant to researcher (Edwards, 2002). Rapport and mutual trust may facilitate easier access to research spaces and participants, contingent upon a number of factors, including nature of the 'insider' status and the purpose of the research. There may also be benefits of prior knowledge of history and cultures of the group, space and/or organisation (Edwards, 2002). I realised the benefits of my 'insider' knowledge in data gathering. In interviews, my familiarity with punk and DIY culture allowed more conversational depth than may have been possible without it, particularly when interviewing friends. Familiarity was beneficial in saving time in introductions and rapport-building and with shared references that did not need explanation; for example, one participant referred to a project that we had both been involved previously, so they did not need to go into great detail beyond how they felt about it.

My position as an insider also led to participant assumptions of my insider knowledge. On occasion, interviewees assumed that I would know what they meant by a term and therefore did not offer an explanation. For example, in one interview a participant repeatedly said *'well, you know all about it anyway'*. I

explained that I only know what I think and I wanted to know what *they* think. Another case involved confusion when a participant was discussing the manifestation of punk that they feel connected to, as opposed to forms of punk that they dislike. They kept referring to 'our' scene (including me) and were confused when I asked them to explain, disjoining the conversation temporarily. Though not a great concern, managing participant expectations and assumptions was helpful in my interviews, it meant I avoided collecting data lacking necessary detail. Still, shared cultural references also meant I have understanding of subcultural nomenclature, which aided data collection. Shared language understanding extends to regional dialect too, for example, the word 'us' can be used interchangeably with 'me' in North East dialects, which is distinguishable in spoken language through emphasis and context.

The lack of clarity about when I was or was not a 'participant-researcher' or just a 'participant' proved to be helpful on occasion too. For example, in the early stages of data collection I was having a conversation with a friend in their home about DIY punk in small towns. After a lengthy discussion, I suggested that the feelings of small-town melancholia can lead to interesting and unique forms of creativity and collectivity. They agreed, followed by a pause and then *'Oh my God, you have to put this stuff in your PhD'*, prompting me to put a note in my research diary, situating the conversation within the analysis that I was working on at the time. On another occasion a friend mentioned how they felt about a gender imbalance at some shows, saying *'It's annoying how even when there's really cool women performing, the crowd can still be a total bro sausage-fest<sup>22</sup>'*. I then asked if they would mind me including their comments in my field notes, to which they agreed and replied, in jest *'oh man, if I'd known it was going to be in your PhD I'd have come out with something cleverer.'* My pre-existing relationship with the research topic meant I was able to informally discuss my research progress and dilemmas faced with others involved in DIY. Though not initially intended as

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<sup>22</sup> By 'bro sausage-fest' my friend was crudely but light-heartedly insinuating substantially more cis-gender men than other gender identities, and a felt dominance of (negative) expressions of hegemonic masculinity in a space (see 6.3 on exclusionary gendered practices within punk spaces). Cis-gender refers to a person whose gender-identity corresponds to their biological sex.

part of my methods, the opportunity afforded through my 'insider' status, to develop ideas through discussions, with subcultural as well as academic peers, was invaluable.

The benefits of being an insider researcher notwithstanding, there are several aspects of researching DIY punk that have caused me concern as a result of my position as an 'intimate insider' researcher, including disclosure, disengagement and positionality (Labaree, 2002; Taylor, 2011). The difficulties in researching a community that the researcher is part of are discussed by Bogdan and Biklen (1998). They warn that the researcher's 'insider' experiences may make it difficult to step back to observe, to gather data. So, the realisation of the advantages that insider research can offer requires caution and reflexivity (Hodkinson, 2005). I engaged with my positionality through a reflexive approach, to negotiate some of the pitfalls of 'insider' research and to benefit from the knowledge and experience of my own familiarity. For example, my academic engagement with the concept of 'scenes' has been more complicated than anticipated, as a result of my 'insider' assumptions of what a 'scene' is.

The pitfalls of blurring the personal and the professional or academic have been documented by authors such as Ward (2007), who highlights the work of researchers who have aimed to contribute to social change by practising and performing activist research. Askins (2009), Chatterton (2006), Chatterton and Pickerill (2010), Maxey (2004), and Pickerill (2008) have all discussed their experiences of doing activist research that blurs the boundary between activist and academic and some of the associated tensions, such as reconciling the expectations of the individuals, group, or movement at its focus, with the expectations of the academy and with personal aims and analysis.

On occasion, participants made assumptions about what the research would or should be about. I had to respond to the interests of participants but also retain control of the research direction and retain my responsibility as the researcher.

To overcome such obstacles, Labaree (2002) advises researchers to be clear and honest with participants about their intentions from the outset. While there is merit in this suggestion, initial clarity and precision can be problematic, particularly for those who intend to leave some flexibility in their research planning, to allow for changes in the movement, activity, group or scene being studied, or who wish to use a grounded approach. My concern about managing participant expectations is related to the nature of informed consent and how informed 'informed consent' can realistically be; (see ethical considerations in 3.3.4) and my responsibilities to be honest with my research participants, about the expected outcomes of the research. Clear research aims were outlined, both to inform participants and to guide their expectations. I also explained the iterative nature of the research to participants, and the potential for changes in focus through the process. So, while my research allowed the interviews and observations to influence the focus of the research to some degree, I had to maintain control and ensure that participants were clear about the aims and nature of the research.

'Entering' and 'exiting' the 'field' is difficult in insider research. My dual role as a participant and a researcher was on occasion, problematic. At one event I was asked by a friend to manage their bands 'merch'<sup>23</sup> at the back of the room, which altered the position from which I was observing, raising the issue of my dual position and my responsibilities to my research and to my friends. It also raised the question: at what point does my 'existence in the field' become fieldwork?<sup>24</sup> When reviewing my data collection and analysis, it was not easy to be exact about when I entered the field as a researcher, and it is difficult to distinguish when experience, reflection and analysis development began. It is possible to see when I started formally noting observations for this project. I also attended shows that I would not have, travelled further, and talked to people, in depth, I did not know before, but this cannot be fully disconnected from my involvement beforehand. I

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<sup>23</sup> The stall selling the bands' CD's, records, t-shirts and stickers.

<sup>24</sup> Massey (2003) unpicks the common use of 'exploring' in social research, such as saying that I 'explored' research themes in the field, in a traditional notion of fieldwork; highlighting the implausibility of 'embarking' on social investigation, 'going out there' at a clear point in time.



was already familiar with many of the spaces and people I observed. In my personal life, I was involved in the community I planned to study, so I inevitably started thinking about the issues before I began. The development of my ideas did not start when my 'fieldwork' did, in the same sense that I will likely keep thinking about the issues discussed long after I have completed my thesis.

As a punk 'participant', my familiarity, experience and knowledge is not straightforward. For example, Nguyen (2011) expressed her love-hate relationship with punk and the importance of her own history with it, due to tensions around inequalities in punk, particularly with regards to race. I have my own complicated relationship with punk. I recognise the limitations of DIY punk cultural production and I am critical of the often idealistic aims and potential, sometimes espoused by punk participants, but I can feel defensive when those criticisms are made by others. For these reasons, acknowledging my positionality and endeavouring to remain reflexive in my approach was crucial throughout.

Discussing the potential benefits and pitfalls of 'insider research', requires engaging with the literature that has questioned the dichotomy between 'insider' and 'outsider'. This dichotomy has been fundamentally critiqued on the basis of the fluidity of the position of the researcher. To consider the 'insider' position there are multiple layers to address: the researcher's sense of 'insiderness', the participants' sense of the researcher's 'insiderness', the participants' sense of their own 'insiderness' (whether or not they recognise that status), where the lines are drawn between sameness and difference and, when all this is considered, what impact does this have on the research process (fieldwork and analysis)? Being an 'insider' is arguably dependant on space and place, as well as social and cultural context and depends on a multitude of factors.

Much discussion about 'insider' or 'outsider' research relates to identity categories, such as ethnicity, gender, class, and age (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Song & Parker, 1995). As my 'insider' status relies on my past involvement in the culture

and community, my perceived 'insider' status, in terms of participants' perceptions, may be contextual and contingent. For example, I was a 5ft tall, white, 26 year old woman, from North East England, all of which, and many more personal factors, may influence my sense of comfort, safety and 'insiderness' in a research setting. My status as a PhD student may mean that I am perceived as middle-class and privileged. These factors (along with numerous others) may or may not have influenced participants' individual sense of me as an 'insider', in relation to their own identity categories, as well as considering my status as an 'insider', in terms of DIY. For Song and Parker (1995, p.241) *'Interviewees could claim either commonality or difference with us, on the basis of gender, language, physical appearance and personal relationships'* and feelings of 'sameness' or 'difference' may not be mutual. Therefore, the familiarity and sameness associated with 'insider' research is more complicated than identity categories (those assumed by the researcher and those by the participants). Post-structural critiques of the notion of fixed identity categories are relevant here. Butler (1990) illustrated how identity can be fluid and contingent, through her deconstruction of 'taken-for-granted' identity categories, often used in research. Her analysis shows how assuming 'insider' status, based on categories determined by the researcher, is problematic.

The lines of my 'insider' or 'outsider'-ness could be drawn in multiple ways. I began to consider the complexity of 'insider' research when I was helping at the sound desk, at a show where I felt a sense of belonging and comfortable. It was at a venue I was familiar with, there were people I knew there, I knew of and liked the bands that were playing; I did feel like a relative 'insider' in that context. However, during one band's performance, a group of people came in behaving, as I perceived, fairly aggressively and one made a comment about my ability to do the sound, based on me being a 'lass'. Immediately I felt very uncomfortable and awkward. This incident did not shake my position as an 'insider', in term of access or previous knowledge of the research area and setting, and the comment was not necessarily (or likely to be) reflective of the views of others in that setting. Yet, I was made aware that my gender plays a role in some people's perceptions

of me as an 'insider' (that is, I was out of place as a 'lass doing sound') and my own sense of comfort in the research setting was challenged; illustrating the fluidity of the position(s) of the researcher and questioning the plausibility of an 'insider' position. I did not always *feel* like an insider. Hence, for Ng (2011), the researcher oscillates between multiple positions while conducting fieldwork, which is always contextual, relational, and politicized.

It is possible for a researcher to be an insider and an outsider in a particular research setting, simultaneously (Delyser, 2001; Sultana, 2007; Zavella, 1993). Hodkinson (2005, p.133) describes the '*diverse, ephemeral and loosely bounded nature of subcultural grouping making the proximity or distance of social researchers variable and hard to predict.*' Also, returning to considerations of the unboundedness of subcultures and the multitude of manifestations of punk (see 2.2 & 2.3), the boundaries of punk scenes are not clear cut. Two people may draw the boundaries around '*their*' scene in different ways, even in specific local contexts, while appearing, even to an 'insider', as part of the same scene. For example, three participants, who all live in or near the same town, have described their sense of being part of a 'Xtown' or 'North-East' 'scene' differently, while at the same time maintaining a sense of collective identity rooted in 'the DIY punk scene'. So, in the context of this research project, it is not possible to claim that I was an 'insider' in an absolute sense. Though the benefits of my 'insider-ish' position were often apparent, I recognise that 'insiderness' is related to a number of critical factors that are determined by the circumstances of the moment (Labaree 2002).

There is further complication of my positionality, in my being in-between 'academic' and 'activist' or 'punk'. While academically studying DIY punk cultural production as activism, it is difficult to comfortably position myself within those boundaries. Attfield (2011) sums up the predicament that punk researchers face: '*In some respects scholarly writing on punk rock seems like a contradiction. How can music so rooted in anti-establishment sentiment be appropriated into an*

*institutional setting?* It seems a contradiction, therefore, to try to pin down 'punk' in order to study it in an academic setting (Miner & Torrez, 2012). Even within academic literature on punk, there are debates about the appropriateness of different research approaches and who should be carrying it out. One well-established punk scholar expressed frustration with the absence of focus on struggles to *create* scenes from post-modern academic accounts of cultural hybridity in punk, O'Connor (2002, p.233) states that: '*The professors aren't punks*' as an explanation. So, even within the realms of 'punk academia', there is dispute about which accounts are appropriately 'punk' enough. This reasoning suggests that research about punk should itself be 'punk' to be appropriate, emphasising the benefits of researchers of punk being participants in punk culture themselves. However, when the complexity and diversity of punk is considered, it seems unlikely that uncontested lines can be drawn between real 'punk' scholarship and not-punk scholarship. So, O'Conner's (2002) comment highlights the potential risks of researching punk; not only may the researcher's status as an academic be questioned, but also their position as a 'punk academic' or 'academic punk' may be challenged. There is potential conflict beyond the academy, about the 'unpunkness' of academia, as well as within academia about what counts as legitimate research, plus within punk as an academic field. These points indicate how a position in such a grey area may be difficult to negotiate.

When research involves an engagement with topics/ideas/settings that are embedded in our personal lives, problems can arise and the relationship between 'researcher' and 'participant' or 'activist' can be hard to untangle (DeLyser 2001). I have felt conflicted in researching DIY activists and cultural producers, feeling a level of guilt because of my position as a researcher and the potential personal benefits for me from the research, and also a concern about how to represent what I observed, even that it may not be how the participants would have it represented (similar to conflicts outlined by Pickerill, 2008). As Askins (2009, p8) similarly describes, referring to work undertaken with 'Families Unite in Newcastle'; '*as I write I'm deeply aware of my privileged position, the power relations caught up in my involvement with FUN, and the problematic ethics*

*around research, encounters and representation.*' There is also an issue of context. I am aware that only certain factors can be represented in this project, and those reading the analysis may not be familiar with the actual lived context of DIY (punk), and this must be taken into consideration.

Attempts to bridge the gap between activism and academia, through research, may provoke challenge from those within the researcher's discipline and from activists (Askins, 2009; Attfield, 2011; Cresswell & Spandler 2012; Delyser, 2001; Haenfler, 2012; Halfacree, 2004; Hill, 1992; Pickerill, 2008). Hill (1992) recognises that 'activist' or 'radical' research is primarily radical to those working within the academic world, and so may not have the same resonance beyond the academy. Similarly, the dualism between radical politics, within the academy and radical politics outside it, is examined by Halfacree (2004), who implies that some of the tensions provoked by claims to be carrying out activist-academic research are related to the contested notion of radicalism. Pickerill (2008, p.482) is critical of her position as an activist-academic and draws on a critique from a fellow activist that her research is '*operating in a parasitical relationship to those who are doing the real work*'. In response, Pickerill (2008) engages with the critique and explains the importance of reflexivity and respect in research, as well as suggesting that academics' lived practices should reflect their written theory. This I strived to achieve, through my continued commitment to DIY punk. Tensions can also arise from a tendency in academia to assume that theory is only produced within academia, yet writers have highlighted that activism and social movements are sites for theoretical and critical thinking (Cresswell & Spandler, 2012; Downes et. al., 2013). DIY cultures, in particular, have rich histories of alternative knowledge production, through zines and other creative forms of information dissemination (Downes et. al., 2013; Triggs, 2006). So, bridging the gap between activism and academia must be done with care, as efforts may provoke conflict with either side and within the researcher themselves (Croteau et al., 2005). To try to tackle these concerns I regularly discussed my research progress and thoughts with other subcultural participants, as a check on my on-going analysis.

### 3.3.4 Ethical Considerations

To carry out ethical social research, researchers need to think beyond rules, procedures and protocols to become 'ethical thinkers', who can appropriately respond to the often unanticipated ethical situations and dilemmas that they may encounter (Clark & Walker, 2011; Downes et al., 2013). Adding to the earlier discussion, about my positionality and need for reflexivity to ensure ethical research procedures, here I discuss my practical efforts to respond to the potential ethical issues in the research design and the ethical dilemmas I encountered throughout the project. Using the guidance of Robson (2002), Denscombe (2007), and Bryman (2012), I structure the following discussion around the themes of informed consent and the right to withdrawal (and openness), confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring no harm is done to participants. I highlight concerns specific to my project, as insider/participant research, and the ethical dilemmas associated with doing research on DIY cultures and communities.

#### 3.3.4.1 Informed consent

The ethical procedures for my research were complex, because of the methods used and my prior involvement in the communities that I researched. For the interviews, gaining informed consent was fairly straightforward. I provided each participant with a 'Research Ethics Framework Research Information Form', detailing the purpose of the study, why they were asked to be involved and how the information would be used. This was given in advance of the interview, to allow time for them to reconsider; they were informed that they could withdraw at any time. Participants had time to read the information and ensure that they understood it, before agreeing and signing a consent form.

However, fully informed consent was not always achievable or appropriate, given the ethnographic nature of my research approach. Gaining *fully* informed consent in participant/insider research cannot be confidently assured by the signing of a one off agreement (Downes et al., 2013). In my observational data collection at

shows, I did not make explicit announcements or attempts to inform all the people entering the music events that research was taking place. This was because they were public events and this could have affected the data collected and the experience of those attending the event. Still, I notified organisers and when people approached me and asked about what I was doing, or when I entered into conversations with individuals, I explained that I was carrying out research and provided information about the project when requested.

The principle I began to follow was that observations, without consent, are generally accepted in spaces where participants could expect to be observed anyway, that is public spaces (Robson, 2002). However, this was tested when I attended house shows; these are organised as public events but held in the private space of a home. This example raised questions about where to draw the line between public and private space (also identified by Robson, 2002). To overcome this challenge, I asked for permission from the people who organised the event and the people whose home it was and told people who were there (some of whom I already knew) that I was researching the event assured them that details would be anonymised.

Fully informed consent is not always possible or even practical. As discussed above, my role as a researcher was not always (or even often) easily distinguishable from my role as a 'punk' participant (including my roles as a band member, a show promoter, a cake stall organiser, a friend, and a relative). Different aspects of my life, identity and personality are all intertwined. Though I attempted to draw distinctions between when I was and was not researching, there were occasions where events or conversations became more meaningful later, in relation to other data I collected subsequently, and so became data (Downes et al., 2013).

Examples of consent 'grey areas' highlight the ongoing dynamic and negotiable nature of informed consent when doing ethnographic research, especially when

the researcher is a participant/'insider', as these situations have the potential to crop up at any time. Taylor (2011) explains that insider researchers need 'keen intuition' to understand what information provided by participants could or should be deemed 'off the record'. This advice illustrates the complexity of consent, as participants may feel comfortable enough to say something that they may not wish to be included in the research write up. One way I attempted to address these dilemmas was by checking with participants about information shared once transcribed. I found regular dialogue about my research development with participants, who have shown a keen interest in such discussions throughout my data collection, very helpful- though not always easy. So, due to my prior relationships and cultural embeddedness, my research required an adaptive and sensitive approach to informed consent.

#### 3.3.4.2 Confidentiality, anonymity and the use of Pseudonyms

In a paper I co-wrote with Downes and Breeze (2013), we discussed our collective concerns about the expectations in academia of participant pseudonyms. Despite traditions in social research of participant anonymity, the use of pseudonyms has been brought into question (Browne, 2003; Cresswell & Spandler, 2012; Downes et al., 2013). The use of pseudonyms in research on activism is problematic, as it is a '*contradiction between seeing social movement [activists] as critical agents of change and gazing upon them 'academically' as objects of research*' (Cresswell & Spandler, 2012, p. 11).

I had not considered the imposition of pseudonyms as problematic until one participant asked if they could pick their own pseudonym; a name they are known by within DIY punk communities. Researchers must contemplate how to negotiate protecting individuals' anonymity while acknowledging that some participants may want the option to be credited for their own ideas. In response, I therefore discussed an 'opt-out' approach to the use of pseudonyms with participants. I made it clear to participants that they would be automatically given a pseudonym and all identifying characteristics would be altered to protect their



identity, unless they requested otherwise. The majority of participants accepted those terms, but four participants requested that their real names, or a pseudonym of their choice, be used (see discussion in 5.4 of the use of 'punk names'). However, an issue arose, due to the content of the interview data. It became clear that, given the nature of the DIY punk community and the scenes I was researching, by using identifying pseudonyms (nick names or punk names) for some participants, it could become possible for others to become identifiable. So I went back to those participants who had requested their names to be used (excluding Chris Clavin<sup>25</sup>) and explained the dilemma. They then agreed to the use of pseudonyms.

Confidentiality of personal identifying information was ensured and individual anonymity protected. The information form explained that the information gathered would be kept anonymous, during data collection and during the write-up of the results. I made great effort to ensure external and internal anonymity, by disguising individual identifying characteristics and using pseudonyms; no real names of people or places or initials are linked to individual quotes or information, for those who agreed a pseudonym would be used. I took care to ensure internal anonymity within DIY punk communities, as well as external anonymity, in situations where there were people who did not know that a researcher was present, as a participant or 'insider' researcher. I use pseudonyms for place names and organisations where appropriate. Information gathered in interviews and in observations has been stored securely.

#### 3.3.4.3 Risk of harm to participants

I assessed that there was a low risk of potential harm to participants in this project, but took steps to minimise harm nonetheless. The semi-structured interviews

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<sup>25</sup> As Chris runs Plan-It-X Records, one of the world's most prestigious DIY punk labels, I felt it was important to use his chosen name. Chris's involvement in this research provides a significant contribution to literature on DIY punk and does not risk the revealing of other participants' identities, in the same way that using other participants' names might, as he does not live in the geographical where the research was conducted.

allowed for conversational flow, so I could not pre-determine exactly what would be covered. I did not intend to discuss any sensitive material in particular, and so did not expect the information discussed to cause any harm, upset or discomfort to participants. However, I was aware that any topic has the potential to be sensitive for an individual, to evoke feelings of discomfort for reasons I could not predict. Therefore, it was made clear to participants, before interviews began (in the consent form and my verbal explanation), that they were free to end the conversation and withdraw at any point or choose not to answer individual questions. Also, on two occasions, participants asked beforehand what we would talk about specifically; so I had conversations with them about how the interview might go and explained my research themes. I expected that this was a result of individuals feeling nervous about being caught off-guard and not having anything to say. In these circumstances, I was clear that the conversation was informal and there were no particular answers that I was looking for. These anxieties seemed to subside once the interview started. No participant asked to withdraw or refused to answer questions, and as far as I could tell from my position, no conversations caused any discomfort or distress.

Researcher well-being should also be a consideration, though is little talked about in methodology texts (Downes et al., 2013). Along with general safety concerns involving practical assurances that I would remain physically safe during research, there are also affective and emotional aspects of research. Doing research on a topic so personal to me has, and continues to have, an impact on my relationship with and feelings towards the group, scene(s), community/communities and movement that I studied. Before I started the project, I was unprepared for the emotional turmoil that could result from doing research on such a personal topic. Feelings of anxiety and conflict came from the ethical issues discussed above, as well as concerns about how to represent what I observed, especially if it might not be how the participants would have it represented. At various points throughout the research process, I felt conflicted as a result of researching people and spaces that I know, feeling a degree of guilt due to my position as a researcher and the potential personal benefits that I may

feel as a result of the research. Also, the complexity of my 'insiderness', discussed above, caused me, at times, to feel '*at once connected and estranged from one's social setting*' (Taylor, 2011, p5), which was difficult to navigate. Another risk of, in some sense, turning your hobby into work, is that you may lose the passion you once felt for it. I have found that my relationship to DIY punk has altered throughout my research (Downes et al., 2013). I feel that there has always been tension in my relationship with DIY punk, and this has possibly been intensified by my decision to try to capture some essence of whatever 'it' is in my research. In lieu of being prepared for inner feelings of conflict and stress, I have found that discussions with academic and subcultural peers have been invaluable.

### **3.3.4 Data Analysis**

Here I discuss the methods of analysis used in this project. As Corbin and Strauss (1990, p.419) explain, '*in grounded theory, the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected*'. Starting analysis at the first stages of data collection is used in grounded research to assess from the beginning, whether or not the themes identified from literature review are still relevant after some of the data has been gathered. After data collection I used 'indexing' to highlight key words and common themes during the process of transcription and when reviewing my field-notes. As already mentioned, I also kept a research diary alongside my field notes, which I used to document themes as they emerged and to flag any potential areas for further analysis. By analysing data throughout, my research findings were strengthened by analysing the data over time, as was the relevance of the questions asked throughout, and it helped develop and deepen the themes being analysed, in the context of the particular research setting.

A concern in analysis, when researching communities and relationships we have a personal commitment to or stake in, is the dilemma of making decisions about what to include. Delyser (2001, p.) warns that researchers, with a level of familiarity with participants or the area of study before their fieldwork begins, can become over-flooded by data due to the amount of experiential and descriptive

knowledge they hold. Data collection is complex and embedded, when one is researching in very familiar territory. Having an overwhelming amount of data to work through can make analysis difficult, particularly initially. Inevitably, it is impossible to cover everything in depth when writing up research, so the researcher must decide what is significant, what is 'relevant' and what to prioritise for discussion. This is further complicated by what, the researcher finds, is important or of interest to participants, competing with what may be significant or of interest to an academic audience and to those who fit both those criteria.

The large amount of data gathered in familiar settings, which are not well researched, is reflected in analysis and write-up through the need for detailed context setting. The general lack of understanding within academia, of subculture or community specific language use, means that context setting is needed for an academic audience that may be unnecessary if research is presented to participants who are familiar with or part of the DIY cultures or communities (Downes et al. 2013). The paucity of dialogue among academic communities about DIY cultures and the lack of language appropriate to represent such cultures, to unfamiliar audiences, can lead to a reliance on descriptive work, because of the need to explain the basics. So, there is a need to find balance in analysis and write-up, between adequate context setting and descriptive writing. I therefore took care to consider and distinguish what information would be significant to the appropriate audience, while I remained mindful of the need to accurately represent the phenomena and people I studied with.

Each analysis chapter begins with a vignette (a longer extract or story) from my data collection, to contextualise the analysis of the chapter and introduce its key themes. Generally, vignettes are used as a qualitative data collection method. They are used to elicit rich data by asking open ended questions relating to the scenario presented through the vignette (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, I use vignettes as a data analysis and presentation method. Because vignettes are particularly useful in data collection, where participants lack direct experience of or knowledge about something (Barter & Renold, 2000), I use them to provide

greater context to the findings being presented. As Chapter 4, the first of three analysis chapters, addresses the implementation of DIY punk ethics in practice, I provide a composite vignette of a DIY punk show, using data gathered across my observations to illustrate and condense some of my observational findings. Chapter 5 begins with an analysed data extract from a house show I attended, to illustrate the connectedness of punk community, and Chapter 6 begins with a story illustrating the tensions around participant attempts to construct culture, which adheres to participant ethics, through the 'calling out' of behaviours that are perceived to betray those ethics.

### **3.4 Conclusions**

Participant-research in the field of DIY culture involves balancing acts of submergence and distance in data collection and analysis, openness and flexibility in research design and process, and personal and professional goals and expectations. In my 'insider' approach it was important to prepare strategies for changes in the group and activities I was studying (Levinson, 2010), to navigate personal and interpersonal dilemmas and my own positionality, and to have tactics to avoid being overwhelmed by the data.

My structured, but flexible, approach led to rich data from participants with an interest in DIY culture and from a variety of DIY punk spaces and events. It is difficult to find specific advice on negotiating opportunities and tangents during fieldwork, as all research projects are different and the potential chances and choices, which may present themselves during a project, cannot be fully predicted (Taylor, 2011). The methods of data collection and sampling I used were appropriate to in depth theoretical insights (particularly from interviews) and broader contextual data (particularly from observations), as DIY punk is under-researched. I particularly found keeping a research diary helpful in the teasing together of my multi-method approach, being careful to document when new themes emerge, and when original themes may seem less relevant, and I was sure to fully engage with why this was the case throughout the fieldwork. I found

that balancing different expectations and fieldwork pathways, while managing an overwhelming amount of data, required careful and constant negotiation and strict personal discipline, to keep the project on a navigable course. Though at times difficult to manage, with project-specific ethical dilemmas as well as those that are encountered in much reported research, I found my, somewhat, grounded ethnographic approach well-suited to a project aiming to explore a complex social phenomena that has been under-researched, which I have a personal relationship with.

## 4.0 'Doing it Ourselves': A DIY Ethic and Praxis

As I demonstrated in my review of the literature, DIY is a complex and multifaceted social phenomena with rich meaning in terms of theory and praxis. DIY, as a movement, encompasses a variety of cultural and political actions and activisms, tied to an ethic of anti-capitalism, cooperation, collaboration and autonomy (Beaver, 2012; Chatterton, 2010; Downes, 2012; Moran, 2010; Spencer, 2008; Trapeze-Collective, 2007). DIY cultures and communities have a DIY ethic at their heart, as a motivator for action, interaction and organisation (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006; McKay, 1998; Purdue, et al. 1997). There are DIY ways of doing and being, based on a DIY ethic. I use 'a DIY ethic' to entitle this chapter as 'a' DIY ethic may be singular to an individual, but overall 'a DIY ethic' can also reflect the plurality of ethics associated with DIY punk. This chapter analyses what DIY means to the participants in the study, drawing on empirical work, to develop previously limited academic discussions about what DIY means and why it is powerful. Key theoretical frameworks brought to bear surround the autonomy, creativity, collaboration, dissatisfactions, and resistance, present in the production of alternative cultural spaces and communities. The findings broadly support DIY as exemplary of complex interconnections between ethical praxis and activism that is multi-layered.

The critical contribution to literature, here, is to move beyond attempting to conceptualise what DIY *is* (see 2.3.1), by developing an understanding of DIY, rooted in participant accounts, which acknowledges DIY's multiplicity, but also cements its rich meaning and power. The findings highlight that anti-capitalism, or working in a not-for profit way, are key to DIY cultural activity. Collaboration and collectivity, as well as the more individual and personal understandings and experiences of DIY, that participants make when defining DIY, are also vital. To begin I use the first of three vignettes to present data on a DIY ethic and DIY punk practice, through an exploration of 'the DIY show'. The vignette highlights the

themes of this chapter and introduces some themes of the following two analysis chapters. I then describe some of the activities that illustrate the *doing* of DIY; how participants perform a DIY ethic. Next, participant engagement with a DIY ethic is discussed, as well as how they described DIY manifesting in their lives through decision making, attitudes, behaviour and actions. The connections between DIY and other political and ideological positions that participants held (such as vegetarianism, veganism, feminism, socialism, and anarchism) are explored. The findings illuminate the rich political thought that saturates DIY culture. The findings also reveal the significance of participant dissatisfaction with what is otherwise available in their locality, and with 'mainstream' culture and society in general. This research then demonstrates how the DIY ethic is a catalyst and a mechanism for action and organising. Themes of autonomy, creativity and political realisation are considered and the significance of place is addressed. I conclude the chapter by returning to debates on activism (see 2.1), to propose that conceptualising DIY punk praxis as activism could lead to a sharper and more helpful definition of activism, as a useful way to address the gaps between arguments that suggest that activism should be understood as having a broad and inclusive nature, and arguments that an all-encompassing definition of activism could render the concept meaningless.

#### **4.1 Vignette 1: Punk Praxis and the DIY punk show**

This research found that DIY shows embody an ethic of DIY through the way they are organised. From a culmination of observational ethnographic data and interview findings, I have produced a walk-through account of what a typical DIY punk show looked like in the North-East UK in 2012-13. The vignette illustrates DIY praxis through punk shows as the spaces where DIY punk attitudes, customs and communities primarily coalesce. Though there is no prescribed written code for how to practice DIY; there are certain expectations associated with DIY shows that I hope to illuminate through the narrative. Though this is a fictional account and will not describe every DIY punk show, it is a composite narrative of my findings and experiences, which also provides context for my other research



findings<sup>26</sup>.

*The show is being held in a function room of a pub/bar. You walk into the room where the bands are playing. To your right there is a table with a hand written sign saying '£4 please'. It is written on the back of a flyer for another show (a friend of the promoter-the person who has organised the show- has brought them to hand out). The promoter is behind the table holding a pint glass containing the money taken so far. The promoter does not notice you at first, as he is talking to a member from each of the three bands playing that night. They are working out the order of the first two bands by flipping a coin. The choice is being made between two bands who are reasonably local (they had travelled within 15 miles). The last band who will play (the headline act) is a touring band whose appearance in the area is rarer and whose costs will be higher; so they will play last. As you wait, the promoter's friend steps in to greet you and take your entrance money. You hand over your money and they draw a small cross with a marker pen on the back of your hand.*

*At the back of the room there are several tables with merchandise of the bands playing displayed on them. There is also a stall set up which sells the music of DIY bands not playing at the show. The stall is called a 'distro' (short from distributor/distribution) and is being managed by a person who runs a local DIY record label. They are selling vinyl records, tape cassettes and CDs of music they have released, as well as releases from other bands and DIY record labels. There are also some zines for sale. You look through the zines and there is one about surviving without a job, one about herbal remedies, and one about sexual consent. There are a few diary comics by different comic artists and a tour diary of a DIY punk band. They cost about £1-£2 each, but some are free. The zine stall is coordinated by someone unconnected to the promoter, who asked if they could hold the stall at the show. You talk to this person and they say that they do not really know the bands playing but try to get to as many local DIY shows as they can to sell their zines and to 'support the scene'<sup>27</sup>.*

*As you arrive early, you see the bands carrying in the last of their gear<sup>28</sup> and*

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<sup>26</sup> The three fictional bands I describe were created from a culmination of field-notes from seeing many different bands of different musical styles and political (or non-political) persuasions from several different countries. They are not necessarily three types of music that would appear together on a bill (though not totally unlikely). I intended to provide evidence of the range of different styles in terms of music and on-stage 'banter' that I have seen throughout my research. The description of the last band is an intense and exciting performance with a lot of physical, vocal and sonic interaction between the band and crowd, which I have seen many times over the years, but is not expected at every DIY show. When bands that were well known had travelled internationally, there tended to be a more raucous crowd response.

<sup>27</sup> 'Support your scene' was a phrase used by several participants to represent an expectation that people should attend shows not just because they want to see the bands performing but to also ensure that organising shows remains sustainable and to ensure that the scene in their town thrives. 'Support your scene' relates to DIY punk vernacular which encourages involvement and strengthens sense of community and belonging which I discuss further in Chapter 5 and 6.5.

<sup>28</sup> 'Gear' describes the musical and electrical equipment necessary for a show to happen. It is

*setting up their equipment on the stage or 'stage area' (the area of floor that has been designated for the bands to play). The touring band have brought the most gear, as they are touring with a full 'back-line' (a full drum kit, guitar and bass amps and speaker cabinets) as well as their instruments. As one of the other two bands playing is a full electric band too, the headlining band have agreed to let them use their drum kit shell and speakers if they want to, as the other band have brought their guitar and bass amplifiers and the drummer has brought drum 'breakables' (snare drum, bass drum pedal and cymbals). The other band playing has only two members, one with an acoustic guitar and the other with a mandolin, both members sing. They will just plug their instruments directly into the PA (public address) system.*

*Next to the 'stage' there is a person setting up a PA system, which came with the hire of the venue. The person setting it up is a friend of the promoter who has offered to try to work it out. A member of one of the bands steps in to help. There is no back-stage area so equipment not currently being used is piled up beside the stage area.*

*There is not enough time for all the bands to sound-check properly, so the headlining act sets up and plays half a song while a few people are arriving to the show. The 'sound-person' messes about with the vocal levels, looks at a group of friends watching the sound-check and does a gesture which implies the question 'does it sound ok?' They nod so the band finishes. The other bands agree to do a 'line check' only before they start (which is just a short check that the sound levels are right: the guitarist and bass player play the same chord a few times while the drummer joins in and shouts/sings into the microphone for a few seconds just before they start their set).*

*Although the show was advertised to start at 7.30pm, not many people have arrived by 8pm. The first band is due to start at 8.30pm. Between 8 and 8.30pm people slowly start to arrive, generally in twos and threes, though a few people arrive alone. Most people who come through the door seem to recognise at least one of the other people or groups in the room and start talking to them. The demographic of the audience seems to be mostly 18-28 year olds, mostly white, and there seems to be a gender imbalance with a slight majority of the audience*

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customary for bands to bring the equipment they need to play. Generally the touring band (who will likely be touring in a van) will bring what is known as the 'backline'. It is expected that a 'backline' will include a full drum kit and stands, a bass speaker cabinet, and at least one guitar speaker or combo amplifier and speaker. It is up to the bands to decide between them what they are happy to share. Any other band playing will usually bring guitar and bass amplifiers and drum 'breakables' (snare drum, bass drum pedal and cymbals), though this is often not the case. This custom is contextual and dependant on the scene, for example, when my band toured in the USA it was customary at punk shows for all bands playing to bring all of the gear that they needed, with a much lower expectation of sharing gear. It is seen as good etiquette for bands to ask permission to use other bands gear in advance of the gig where possible. A promoter may contact all the bands in advance and find out what gear each band will need, what they are able to bring, and if the promoter needs to coordinate bringing anything in the absence of necessary gear.

being men<sup>29</sup>.

*The first band starts to play at 8.40pm. They were given a 30 minute slot, but they started a little late as the promoter and the band wanted to wait for a few more people to show up first, so they run over schedule a little. Their style is folk - influenced punk music. They start by introducing themselves 'Hi everyone! I'm Andrew and this is Sarah on mandolin and we are 'Cheep'. During the songs people stand relatively still, with some foot tapping and head bobbing, and after each song people in the room clap, a few people cheer and 'whoop' and there is some interaction between the band and the audience in between songs. For example, one of the members of the band asks 'Is everyone having a nice time?' to which about half the room reply either 'yeah!' or 'whoop!' They also give explanations for a few of the songs they play before they play them, but not all of them. A lot of the explanations have political undertones discussing gender issues, racism, and police brutality and injustice. Before their last song the guitar player says 'Thanks for watching us, we have some CDs at the back. Come and speak to us afterwards, we are nice. This song is about how I like to travel around a lot, and how it's a shame not everyone gets to travel freely', to which a number of the audience respond with a cheer. When they finish playing they put their guitar and mandolin behind the stage, but still in view. Their EP<sup>30</sup> is on recordable CDs (CDRs) that have been copied by themselves. The CDs have the band and EP name written on them in marker pen; the covers are hand folded and decorated card sleeves.*

*There is a 10 minute break (which would have been 20 but the show is running behind schedule) during which music is played over the PA system, while some people go to the bar to get drinks and the next band sets up their equipment. The venue is not technically an all-ages venue, but there is no 'bouncer' on the door to the pub or the door to the function room. You expect that they are asking for ID in the bar room, as some of the younger looking participants do not go in there. Some of the people still in the room start singing along to the music that is being played through the public address (PA) system. You hear someone talking about the record, saying it is the new album of a DIY punk band that has just be released and they have been meaning to listen to it. Their friend replies by saying 'it's OK, but I prefer their earlier stuff'.*

*The second band, 'The Spidrals', move to the stage area, set up and do a line check. The audience hear this check so start to quickly move to the front of the room or file in from the bar area. The band introduce themselves and start their set. They are louder and faster musically than the first band. They are an all-male band that are described on the poster as 'Emo punk from Yorkshire, FFO<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> This composite account of demographic data is based on crude estimates as I did not ask audience members about age, ethnicity or gender identity in my observations.

<sup>30</sup> EP stands for 'Extended Play' and generally refers to a short run of a small number of song recordings which bands may produce before they have an album. This band has a CDR with 4 songs on, recorded themselves at home on a laptop.

<sup>31</sup> FFO stands for 'For Fans Of' and is used to help describe bands.

*Dischord Records<sup>32</sup>' They do not say much in between playing their songs and do not have much interaction with the audience. The content of their songs seems to be fairly a-political and about everyday things and activities, such as having fun with friends and drinking alcohol. Before their last song they thank the crowd for watching them and thank the promoter for putting on the show.*

*As their merchandise (merch here-on) was left unattended while they played and packed away their instruments, the person sitting behind the distro stall sells a few of their records for them and hands the money to the guitarist of the band, when they head over to the table to sit down with their stuff.*

*After a 15 to 20 minute break the last band (who have been in the room the whole time, watching the other bands and talking to people) start to get out their instruments and the audience file in from the bar area and move to the front where the band is setting up their amps. The music being played on the PA system is turned down when they let the person working the PA know they are ready to start.*

*The last band to play, 'Shut!', is a touring band from the USA. They start their set by saying 'Hello we are 'Shut!' from Massachusetts', to which the crowd responds with cheers and clapping. The band members include two self-identifying men, one woman and a person who identifies as gender-queer, which they discuss between songs, particularly as several of their songs discuss gender politics. They have a guitarist, a drummer, a bassist and a singer. The music is quite fast and heavy, but melodic, with vocal harmonies between members. The singer takes the microphone off the stand, so they are able to sing and move around at the same time. The guitarist also has a microphone and sings backing vocals (or melodic backing shouts). The crowd start to physically respond to the music and begin to dance. Most people are moving about a lot more than they did to the other bands. People who do not want to dance move slightly back while the people closest to the stage/singer dance and sing along to the music (dancing mainly involves swaying, bopping and head bobbing/banging, and some more active dancing and jumping around). Some people are pointing or raising fists at particularly well known parts of the songs, some put their arms around each other while singing, and others try to join in singing into the microphone with the singer. The room gets quite hot and sweaty, particularly the band members. There is not much deliberate colliding of bodies, but some is inevitable in this situation. In between some songs they explain what the songs are about; for example explaining that one song is 'about not seeing gender as a binary, and accepting people for who they are, not who you expect them to be.' They start another song by saying 'This one's about challenging sexism within the punk scene. It happens.*

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<sup>32</sup> Dischord Records is a Washington DC based independent and record label started by Ian Makaye of the band Fugazi in 1980, which subscribes to a DIY ethic. Bands that have had records released by Dischord Records include Minor Threat, Fugazi, Rights of Spring, and Make-up. DC punk, with the help of Dischord records, has become known for a particular style of punk music sound and is used to help describe bands which have a similar sound.

*This one's for all the queer punks!' to which many of the crowd cheers (though the audience cheer when the singer says anything). Before their last song, the band thank the promoter for 'putting them on', thank the audience for sticking around for the set and thank the other bands for playing. The last song they play is a song from their best known album and the crowd gets quite raucous with lots of dancing and singing/shouting along.*

*Shut! have a friend on tour with them to help with driving, carrying gear and selling merch (Shut!'s merch includes self-screen-printed t-shirts, 12" vinyl records and CDs of their album. The CD and Vinyl are uniformly produced - possibly 500 of each made through a pressing plant - with cellophane wrapping). The friend goes to the front to watch their set, but goes straight to the back as the last song finishes to watch over their merch stall. The band end up playing one more song as the crowd cheers for a long time after they finish and the promoter confirms that there is time for one more song before the curfew set by the pub. When the song finishes, a small queue forms at the back of the room at their merch table as people wait to buy stuff or to talk to the band about their set. One woman is speaking to the singer of the band, thanking them for coming to their town and expressing her appreciation for their music and the political content of their songs. She says 'It's so class to hear a band calling out punks for being sexist. It's so annoying when people talk about punk as if it's free from that stuff and it's so cool you call sexists out.' To which the singer replies 'yeah, it's important to look at what's good about punk but you have to be critical of the bad stuff too.' They then introduce themselves and thank each other again.*

*There is a member from each band standing with the merch at the back while the rest tidy up all of their equipment, cables and instruments and start carrying them out to their vans/cars parked outside. A few people offer to help them but they politely decline. As the last band walk out, several people tell them they enjoyed their set. They respond sounding grateful but exhausted from playing and are covered in sweat.*

*Once all of the musical equipment is taken out of the venue and the bar staff have been around collecting glasses, the crowd who are left behind are encouraged to leave the building. Outside the local bands set off for home and the touring band get in their van ready to follow the promoter's car to his house as he is letting them stay on his living room floor for the night and has promised them breakfast.*

This account describes a show with few problems, but it deliberately touches on some of the issues and conflicts that arose during data collection. I return to conflicts and challenges in more depth in Chapter 6, where I discuss the ways in which the everyday problematics of DIY punk are negotiated. The key factor here is the ways that a DIY ethic was present in DIY punk praxis at the shows attended.

Participants' desire for 'fairness' was a key theme. The bands shared equipment and were paid on a basis deemed fair, based on band expenses<sup>33</sup>, with the touring band (the band who would have had to spend the most to be there) getting paid the most. The order of the bands, before the touring band, was also decided fairly and the entrance fee and merchandise prices were low, linked to anti-capitalist values (discussed in 4.2). There was also a presence of politics in literature (zines) and in band 'banter'. The vignette also illustrates the coalescence of alternative, challenging, or resistant, politics and tactics within DIY punk spaces (reflected in the representations of queer politics and identity, feminism, anti-racism, and the critique of immigration restrictions). The interconnections that participants identify between different political movements and attitudes, framed within a DIY ethic, are explored in 4.3.2.

DIY ethical praxis is present in the band going to stay with the promoter after the show. It is customary for the promoter to provide accommodation and hospitality for the band, or to organise a place in someone else's home for the band to stay. Being invited to stay with promoters, or promoters' friends or family, makes touring more feasible and affordable for many bands. As well as representing a commitment to keeping punk praxis cheap, spending time with people from other towns as a result of band tours, beyond time spent at the show, can develop friendships and nurture a sense of collectivity, community and strengthens networks (discussed further in Chapter 5). A DIY ethic is also seen in band merchandise and prices. DIY merchandise can mean home-made, home-printed, home-copied and self-released and funded, but can also mean commercially manufactured merchandise, through DIY record labels or commercial pressing plants or merchandise companies (reflected in Cheep's homemade CDRs and Shut!'s self-screen-printed t-shirts, compared to Shut!'s cellophane wrapped CDs and vinyl records). Participants make distinctions between commercially produced DIY music and merchandise, and mainstream music industry practices,

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<sup>33</sup> Though payment of bands based on expenses is not always adhered to, for example a band who are better-known may be paid more than a band who have spent more touring and some bands will ask for a guarantee of a certain amount.

based on the lack of contracts or 'deals' with corporate companies. Funding comes from bands themselves, or through DIY labels, and bands generally retain all rights to their music. Where exactly participants draw the line between *doing* DIY ethics and 'selling out' is a constant cause for negotiation and conflict in punk. Concerns about 'selling out', alongside other tensions and conflicts raised in the vignette regarding oppressive or offensive behaviours, the phenomenon of 'calling out', and problems with venue age restrictions are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6, which explores how participants negotiate these contradictions, conflicts and dilemmas.

Unforeseen problems, or shows not running as smoothly as hoped, occurred many times during data collection. Problems encountered included time constraints, equipment problems and, beyond that, interpersonal upset or conflicts. An attitude of creativity and adaptability was needed (see 4.3.3), as well as the willingness to share knowledge and skills, to successfully organise shows. The amateurism of those involved is, at times, an obstacle to organising events, illustrated by people assisting in trying to understand and operate a PA system. Difficulty with PA systems and other equipment are quite common at DIY shows, especially where there is not a person hired specifically to be in charge of the sound. Over-coming obstacles, learning and sharing experience are all significant to DIY punk praxis and cultural production. Promoters who are newer to organising shows may rely on the expertise of others who have been organising shows, or even on help from bands travelling through the town, based on their experience of playing shows on tour. It is quite usual to hear the somewhat jovial passive reaction *'Well, it's punk isn't it?'* to a problem at a show, such as with sound or equipment. The attitude to carry on regardless and strive to find alternatives, when things go wrong, is important in understanding DIY shows and how DIY punk culture is sustained. Two shows I attended had problems with the PA system. When it came to acoustic acts, who needed to plug their instruments and vocals into the PA system, there were not enough channels on the system to do so. They had to play without the aid of instrument or vocal amplification. The acts reacted by playing anyway and the crowd reacted by staying very quiet (for

the most part, and at one show more than the other) in order to allow the show to continue successfully. An attitude of understanding was present in the crowd, reflecting community and collectivity (see 5.3).

Bands carrying and setting up their own equipment, organising their own tours and driving themselves or asking a friend to, were all examples I observed of bands 'Doing it Themselves'. Instances of bands, physically and vocally, interacting with the audience was common and it was considered courteous for performers to watch the other bands perform too. A lack of separation between bands and audience, physically and interpersonally, reflects a sense of commonality and collectivity (5.2) that you might not expect at larger and more corporate shows (Griffin, 2012). The blurring of 'performer' and 'audience' is typical of DIY shows (see 2.2.2). The significance of the role of space, in the performance and articulation of social identity, difference and power relations, argued by Gregson and Rose (2000), is relevant here. If social identities and power relations are articulated with and through space, then the way space is used in DIY punk shows may reflect a culture of egalitarianism. The imbalance of identity representation and the reference to oppressive practices, made in the discussion between the audience and band member in the vignette, illustrate a coalescence of contradictory ethics and behaviours within and through punk spaces (see 6.3) and the complexity of DIY punk ethics in practice.

The vignette also illustrates the transformative aspect of turning non-DIY spaces into temporarily DIY punk ones. This transformation may happen simply by holding a DIY punk event in a space, or more conscious efforts may be made to transform a space to *feel* more like a punk space. In the most basic sense, a room or venue will be transformed by the preparation for the show to take place: bringing musical instruments and equipment into the space, setting up a stage (or a stage area is marked by the way the instruments and PA have been set up), moving tables and chairs (if present) out of the room or to the edges to create space for dancing or watching, setting up a table next to the entrance of the room



for attendees to pay/donate, and setting up tables at the back for merchandise. In addition, the presence of the 'zine stalls and vegan cake stalls, add a broader DIY punk community context to the show, through a representation of the politics associated through their presence in a space. The presence of flyers for others shows, banners and lighting, and the presence of punk participants, are other examples of how spaces are temporarily transformed.

'Walking through' a punk show illustrates attempts to put DIY ethics into practice in organising punk shows. As a consequence of the research's focus on people's involvement with DIY in a punk context, much of interviewee accounts focused on, but were not limited to, music, bands, organising shows and playing music. The data confirms that DIY ethics are seen in action when bands '*avoid the capitalist, profit-driven music world by promoting their bands, shows, and records themselves or through small companies*' (Haenfler, 2006, p24). The vignette illustrates the work that goes into organising shows in a DIY way, the promotion of ethics and politics that occurs within punk spaces, the attention to keeping costs low, the attempts to act as autonomously as possible and the importance of networks and friendship in overcoming obstacles (see also 5.3). The vignette depicts the collective and collaborative nature of the DIY punk shows attended; shows that take place as a result of the conviction that it is possible to create DIY cultural spaces, which reflect participants' ethics, and that at times, creativity is necessary to overcome obstacles.

## **4.2 Do what yourself?**

DIY ways of doing and being can be seen in a variety of activities. Participants had individual and collective identifications with, and application of, a DIY ethic. During data collection, participants tended to reel off a list of activities that they saw as embodying DIY, when asked what DIY means to them, providing a list of examples of action, rather than more conceptual or abstract definitions. For example,

*Jake: making music on a small scale. Going to shows and supporting bands. Drawing/art and zine making but mainly just drawing stuff. Making films ... On*

*a political level as well, going to protests, volunteering at [a DIY social centre].* He also discussed drawing for himself, and making art work for gifts and for bands to use on their merchandise. Bessa similarly gave examples of activities that you would do 'yourself' to contextualise DIY within punk culture,

*Bessa: I guess DIY punk culture is things like putting out your own CDs, your own patches, booking your own shows, your own tour.*

The data illustrated the complexity and diversity of DIY punk cultural production. Participants reify DIY ethics through many actions and activities. Some participants particularly discussed actions in the context of DIY as a broader cultural phenomenon, which punk is part of. Others outlined such actions as rooted in DIY punk. Activities participants discussed included:

- Drawing
- Creating art
- Making vegan cupcakes and selling them for charity
- Organising a vegan community café with friends
- Buying, reading/watching, making, sharing and swapping DIY films and zines
- Volunteering to run a radical library
- Volunteering at a collectively run social centre
- Starting bands, writing, recording and playing songs, going to shows, going on tour, and making CDs, tapes and other merchandise for own bands and/or musical projects
- Organising shows and helping to book tours for other people and bands
- Cooking food for bands
- Having touring bands to stay at your house (and making them breakfast)
- Supporting DIY bands through promoting and buying their merchandise and music
- Supporting their scene by going to as many shows in the area as possible
- Making cushions out of old t-shirts
- Learning and sharing skills (notably sound engineering, sewing, baking and playing instruments)

- Fund-raising for charity (causes discussed include animals rights and welfare, feminist and No Borders groups and campaigns)
- Making patches and badges (for their own bands, or for other bands to sell, or home-made patches to represent a band, person or political statement)
- Making, printing and handing out posters and flyers for shows
- Sending letters and making pen-pals
- Putting stickers around towns/cities (for bands, charities, political causes, and other messages)
- Being involved in direct action
- Making gifts instead of buying them

Though not an exhaustive list, the wealth of activities here illustrates that DIY ethics are influential in many aspects of participants' lives. These findings have resonance with discussions in 2.1, wherein DIY ethics manifest in a multitude of different attitudes and actions. The Trapeze Collective (2007, p.1) include many activities that may not seem political or tied to an ideology, as being part of DIY. They explain that DIY participants may

*....plant vegetables, organise a community day to get people involved in improving where we live, expose exploitative firms, take responsibility for our health, make cups of tea in a social centre, figure out how to install a shower powered by the sun, make a banner, support strikers, pull a prank to make someone laugh, as well as think.*

These actions are connected by underlying attitudes. Considering the complexity of DIY punk ethics, cultures, communities and identities (see 5.2 and 5.4) it seemed easier for participants to give a list of examples of how they *do* DIY, as articulating the complex meaning of DIY is difficult. Participants discussed ways of 'doing' punk and DIY in relation to motivation for participation. It may be that organising shows or making your own merchandise is inherently DIY, but there is further significance in the interconnected attitudes and motives that participants have for involvement. For Bessa putting on 'your own' shows is an important aspect of DIY punk culture, because otherwise they may not happen, or they may happen in a way that does not fit with your ethics (for example, to profit a capitalist organisation), and also because taking that form of initiative encourages others

to do so by making those actions seem possible (see 4.3.3 discussion of autonomy).

The variety and number of activities, actions and attitudes (see 4.2.2) discussed by participants, as part of their DIY punk cultural production, supports the work of Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.476) who assert that anti-capitalist and autonomous activism may utilise everyday (ethical) practices as building blocks in the creation of a '*hoped-for future in the present*'. The data also supports Moore and Roberts' (2009) assertion that a DIY ethic acts as a mechanism around which organisation occurs; organisation that includes the many processes involved in the production of alternative cultures. I discuss a DIY ethic conceptually in the following section.

### **4.3 A DIY ethic**

The research supports DIY as a social phenomenon that envelops a variety of meanings and activities for participants, and manifests in a multitude of ways. For all interview participants, DIY seemed a difficult concept to articulate. Some needed a little prompting to be able to narrow down exactly what it meant to them, due to its complexity and multiplicity. DIY was described foremost as an anti-capitalist ethic (see 4.3.1), which was underlying in their actions within punk. The findings suggest that a coherent agreed DIY ethic is not possible, but commonalities do exist within DIY ethics. The data illustrates that a wealth of interconnected ideologies and ethics lie beneath the umbrella of 'DIY'.

#### **4.3.1 DIY and anti-capitalist ethics**

Anti-capitalism was emphasised in participant accounts of DIY ethics, characterised by the aim to create and produce culture in a not-for-profit way, the motivation to create, organise and produce for non-financial reasons, and to critique capitalism overtly, through alternative modes of music production and promotion. All interview participants highlighted a distinction between DIY and

mainstream culture, through a focus on culture, politics, interest and enjoyment, rather than profit, as motivation. Broadly describing DIY as an ethic that encourages creativity and action, participants suggested that one of DIY's strengths is the creation of art and politics for reasons other than profit,

*Jake: I think it's ... a positive thing; to try to create art and politics through non-capitalist. I think it's about creating art and politics in a positive way. Like refusing to use it as a money making scheme.*

Jake used 'refusing' to illustrate that the ethic of DIY does not just encourage people to be motivated by reasons other than profit, but to actively reject profit as a motivation for the production of '*art and politics*', as well as music and literature, as he went on to discuss. Participants described DIY as actively anti-capitalist, even if the activities they described were not necessarily oppositional.

DIY record labels, music production and music distribution practices illustrate the anti-capitalist ethic in practice (Cogan, 2008; Dale, 2008; Glasper, 2007; O'Connor, 2002; O'Connor, 2008). Chris explained that, although he organises and funds the production and release of music for bands that are not his own, no one signs any contracts; bands do not 'sign to the label'. He uses a system where he funds the pressing and release of the music and the band is given a percentage of the releases for free. Then if the band sells out of their copies, he sells more to them at cost price. Many of the bands on his label, Plan-It-X, have releases on other labels too, reflecting the lack of exclusive contractual obligation for those releasing music on Plan-it-X, which a major label would require. It is common amongst DIY labels for there to be no formal 'contract' when the label agrees to organise the production and release of a band's record. Chris also explained that he releases music that he wants to put out for different reasons, which are not necessarily based on what he believes will sell. Chris elaborated that he likes to help bands to release their records when he likes their music, but that, more importantly, his decision is based on liking the people and wanting to support them. Samantha also runs a DIY record label and explained that she feels great satisfaction in helping bands to 'do it themselves' by supporting their releases through her DIY record label. She does not see the band's projects that

she helps to release as *her* projects.

*Samantha: It's like, the satisfaction you get from sewing your own pillow cases is the same you get helping someone put out their record and distribute it and enabling them to do it themselves.*

A record label, that I was minimally involved in running in the past, used a model similar to the one that Chris uses at Plan-It-X records. The modelling of music release practice on Plan-It-X records is illustrative of the connections within DIY punk culture, as two record labels based in different countries, are connected through practice and advice (see further discussion of punk collectivity and community as multi-layered in 5.2). Releases on the record label were the result of seeing and meeting bands or hearing bands online. Direct contact was made with the band (not through a formal manager) to say that the record label would be interested in releasing something by them. Yet most of the releases were of bands with members whom those involved in the label had established friendships with. If the band was interested they then arranged recording or may have provided recordings that were already ready to be pressed. The label did not have a role in the production of the record unless the band has asked for help or advice. These cases of alternative modes of production and anti-capitalist motivation support an understanding of DIY punk as a critique of capitalist mainstream music industry practices (Dale, 2008; O'Connor, 2002), although not totally separate from mainstream music industry practices (see 6.2 on how they interact).

Participants who were musicians or performers reflected the anti-capitalist ethic in their accounts of their motivation for performing and creating music. Bessa argued that their creativity is not hindered by a desire to make money. They use creativity to contribute and to be involved in DIY punk culture rather than to 'get big',

*Bessa:... with the comics, like, you don't want the money side of things to be a concern but it sort of is, with DIY. Because, for me being DIY means trying to keep costs as cheap as they can be. And with just making the last comic I've certainly made no money. Like, I've lost money. Which is a common saying with zines that it's like 'if you're in this to make money you*

*better stop now because you're not gunna make any money from this.' And with making music for me it is totally that.*

Participants emphasised that their motivation for cultural production is about enjoyment, for themselves and others, and the sharing of ideas, ethics, and knowledge, not because they think it will make them money. As Peter put it:

Peter: *'Doing it yourself, as in not doing it for another reason as in, doing it to enjoy it, or maybe not for money as well.'*

Denise also practices an anti-capitalist ethic when she runs vegan cake stalls at shows. As well as wanting to have something on offer at shows to make them more interesting or fun, Denise enjoys providing a snack for people to discourage them from going to a larger chain supermarket to buy food, if they are hungry during a show,

Denise: *... it's much better to get the money, not make much money off them, but at least a DIY subculture is getting it, rather than a chain like Tesco's or something.*

Further, any profit made from Denise's cakes goes to local animal sanctuaries, thus the value underpinning the production and sale of the cakes is not about making personal profit.

DIY then encourages anti-capitalist modes of production, including cultural production. Helping to produce music for others based on friendships or positive relationships and a desire to support a band's politics or ideas, rather than being energised by what is likely to make the most money, is an alternative incentive to profit-driven music industry. These findings support Dale's (2008, p.180) contention that DIY record labels remain popular as a conscious DIY method of resistance to the *'hegemony of the major labels and the mainstream music industry'* through working differently, more fairly and, arguably, more freely and creatively than the mainstream music industry. Though the DIY record label could be seen as a 'middle man' such as the one resisted by Bessa (see 4.3.3), if the motivation for running a DIY label is more to support DIY bands and promote their music in a non-exploitative way, without requiring contracts and signatures, then

DIY labels subvert expectations of non-independent record labels<sup>34</sup>. Though the specificities of DIY anti-capitalist praxis are not wholly agreed upon, Chris expressed a baseline for DIY that resonated with all participant accounts, '*you don't make deals with corporate companies*'. Following Chris's baseline for DIY would reduce concerns about creative restriction and losing control, as raised by Bessa, when discussing the 'middle men' found in a non-independent, profit-driven, record label relationship (see 4.3.3 discussion of autonomy and DIY). With the strong anti-capitalist undercurrent of DIY ethics in mind, the next section analyses how DIY politics is influenced by a wealth of political ideas and movements, illustrating the complex patchwork of DIY ethics and praxis.

#### **4.3.2 DIY politics as interconnected**

Participants described DIY punk ethics as extending beyond punk music, further than anti-capitalist means of music production, distribution and performance discussed in the previous section, to various aspects of participants' lives. Participants made connections between different political and ethical movements and ideas when explaining what a DIY ethic is. Their accounts also described personal realisations of different ways of thinking and learning about social problems that they want to challenge, through their involvement in DIY punk. Connections were evidenced in participants' attitudes and ethics and in their actions (from more formal campaigning and direct action, to song lyrics, and to more informal awareness raising and attitude challenging). This research found that DIY punk culture has links to various political ideologies, illustrated through participants' aims to resist forms of societal oppression (sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism were most noted), and aims to create alternative cultural spaces. Connections were made between DIY punk, feminism and gender equality, animal rights, anarchism, anti-racism (anti-English Defence League and anti-British Nation Party direct action were mentioned particularly),

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<sup>34</sup> There are debates around which record labels and record label practices can be considered DIY. The line between DIY and non-DIY is not clear cut (Dale, 2008; O'Connor, 2008; O'Connor, 2010; see 6.2)



LGBT and queer rights, queer politics<sup>35</sup>, body positivity<sup>36</sup>, sex positivity<sup>37</sup>, freedom of movement (through anti-border campaigns and campaigns supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and environmentalism. This research then illustrates the '*rich veins of thought*' that run through DIY culture according to the Trapeze Collective (2007, p.7). DIY punk's historically rich political engagements are also evidenced. For example, 2.1 illustrated how the Riot Grrrl movement challenged sexism and gender inequalities through musical style, lyrics and performance. The relationship between feminism and punk and the continued relevance and influence of Riot Grrrl bands were demonstrated in the data I collected. As Cherry (2006) explained, for punk participants, the abstract political ideas promoted within punk culture are key to understanding motivations for involvement. Though not always consistent, many political influences intersect through DIY cultural production. Expectations of 'punk politics' (see also Chapter 6) illustrate DIY as an anti-capitalist ethic, complexly connected to a wealth of political influences within DIY collective consciousness (collective consciousness is an important part of collective identity, see 2.2.2, 2.3.2, and 5.3.1).

Participants tended to make connections between DIY and other political and ideological beliefs, without hesitation or explanation, illustrating the depth of DIY ideological interconnectedness. Connections made by participants, between

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<sup>35</sup> The 'queer politics' raised in participant accounts referred to the problematizing and challenging of restrictive norms related to gender and sexuality. Queer politics resists rigid identity categories, questioning rigidity and exploring potentialities outside of it (Giffney, 2009). Participants referred to personal relationships with queer politics, such as the freedom and comfort that engagement with queer politics had allowed them in their identities, and the promotion of queer politics within punk spaces.

<sup>36</sup> Body positive activism challenges the stigmatizing of certain bodies in media and public consciousness. Connected to both feminist and queer politics, body-positivity embraces differences in body types. Bessa explained that they had grown to love their 'fat legs' through engaging with body-positive politics (See 6.4).

<sup>37</sup> Sex positivity refers to a school of political thought which challenges the stigmatization of sex and sexuality, particularly women's sexuality, arguing that women should be able to choose what they do with their bodies, free from judgement (Queen, 2001). It challenges negative associations that are made about sex and the enjoyment of sex (such as challenging, or even re-claiming, the labels like 'slut') and encourages more positive engagements with sex. Sex-positivity is an area of contention within feminist politics (Queen, 2001), further highlighting the complexity of ideological connections, commitments and schisms (see examples of ideological schisms in DIY interconnected ethics in Chapter 6).

anarchist politics, punk, and DIY, lie in knowledge sharing, autonomy, rejecting oppressive aspects of mainstream society and expressing and promoting respect for others. Denise aims to confront, resist and reject certain aspects of society, issues that she cares deeply about. For Denise, the promotion of equality focused on inter-species relations. She went on to explain what providing vegan cakes at punk shows is about for her,

*Denise: It's about, sharing and passing on all of this... it's a skill to try and bake and things. And a lot of people come up and ask for the recipe and that's a good starting point of conversation, you can pass it on. And we sell them for much cheaper prices than even sometimes what you buy in a shop or anything like that, and it is interesting. I think it gets a lot of people involved.*

All but one interview participant described a relationship between DIY punk and veganism and vegetarianism, even if they were not vegan or vegetarian themselves. In response to being asked how they would describe punk, Bessa read a letter to me that they had written to a 'non-punk' friend, explaining what a vegan punk is. They connect veganism and punk through vegans being 'political':

*Bessa: ...a vegan is someone who doesn't eat meat/any animal products, no beef, eggs, butter, fish, milk. Most of my friends are vegan. We eat vegan butter, soya milk, fake meats. Most vegans are political with animal rights issues. Often, it seems, you find a lot of vegans who are 'punk' too.*

Though not expressing a theory of causation, Bessa, Chris, Denise, Peter, and Samantha all similarly described a correlation between their involvement in DIY punk and their veganism or vegetarianism, the presence of vegans and vegetarians within DIY punk and in their friendship groups more specifically. Other participants made reference to connections between punk and animal rights more broadly, through a commitment to ending oppression in many forms, an intersection also noted in the work of Stephens-Griffin (2014).

The example of Denise's cake stall represents the coalescence of different values and ideologies through DIY practice. Denise promotes veganism through anti-capitalist and creative means and supports her local punk scene by organising cake stalls at shows. She expressed frustration with assumptions of punk or anarchism being based on destruction and nihilism, as such assumptions

undermine her complex politics and resistance. She described reactions from people not involved in DIY punk to her saying that she makes cakes to sell at shows, critiquing misconceptions of what punk praxis is, or should be.

Denise: *When I say, 'oh, I'm making cakes for this show' and they're like 'you're gunna sell cakes at a punk show? How is that punk? Like, you should be throwing the cakes at the bands and stuff' \*laughs\* and... it's not just about being an anarchist and throwing things around and destroying stuff.*

By saying 'It's not *just* about being an anarchist' she critiques a false perception of what punk in practice is to those who are not involved. These generalisations are also found within academic literature. A tendency for academic accounts of punk histories to have focused on style and on The Sex Pistols and other 1970s major record label punk bands and their nihilism and verbal aggression, is discussed by Furness (2012), (see 2.2). Though Denise struggled to articulate the links between punk and vegan cakes, for her it was clear that the two complement each other. It is important to her to show others that vegan baking can be exciting, tasty and cheap, and, in demonstrating this, she hopes that veganism as a lifestyle will seem more achievable. For Denise, a DIY ethic is part of the motivation for her organising vegan cake stalls at shows and being involved in a monthly vegan community café. These activities were considered 'DIY' by Denise, because they were motivated by principles of anti-capitalism, community and compassion.

Both Chris and Samantha recognised a connection between DIY and environmentalism. Samantha made cushions for her housemates from old t-shirts, inspired by a DIY ethic that encourages reusing, recycling and refurbishing unwanted products, and being motivated to be creative: *'The cushions that I made for our living room were made from old t-shirts that we weren't wearing anymore.'* Samantha explained that this was a small gesture but reflects a new way of thinking that she had discovered through her DIY participation.

Foucauldian and intersectional thought teaches that power and oppression are multi-layered and complex, and so resistance to oppressive practices is also

complex (see 2.1.1). Such complexity was exemplified by the research findings, as participants framed their resistance to various types of oppressive practices within their DIY punk ethics. Denise described her commitment to anti-capitalism, ethical consumerism, anarchism, animal rights and veganism as all connected. She explained how her feminist, punk and vegan 'selves' all developed at different times in her life, but at some point they all seemed to align,

*Denise: I don't see my feminist self and my punk self as separate entities, I see them as combined, 'cause there are a lot of things that go hand in hand; like I feel like feminism and veganism go very well together and I find it's all intertwined at some point or another. But I guess a lot of people don't see them as being related.*

Samantha perceives similar connections between her commitment to DIY, feminism and animal rights, yet discusses these connections in a broader scale,

*Samantha: You can't ignore theories of causation because you think it doesn't fit. I think that people who say that veganism, and feminism, and punk aren't related, they're just not looking at the bigger picture. I'd be inclined to say that people who say that aren't vegan, aren't feminist and aren't punk. And that's not because I have some skewed bias, I feel that I have enough knowledge to say it.*

Samantha thought carefully about her commitment to the different causes she dedicates time to and the connections between them. She implied that if others thought in similar depth about these connections they would come to similar conclusions. Her conviction shows her confidence about the compatibility of DIY punk with feminism and veganism. Here, Samantha implies an intersectional analysis of oppression, which she credits to her involvement in DIY punk.

Political interconnectedness and the proliferation of alternative ways of thinking are felt and built on through cultural spaces, as ideas develop and are shared and promoted. Evelyn, Denise, Daphne and Cheryl all described learning to feel more positive about their bodies, or at least more accepting. They all discussed slowly feeling more comfortable about not conforming to societal expectations of women's appearance, especially in relation to the removal of body hair. All three slowly decided to stop shaving after seeing other punk women with visible body

hair and slowly feeling more comfortable having their body hair visible. Evelyn has multiple scars on her body as a result of self-harming. She explained that though scars do not conform to '*idealistic and unrealistic expectations of women's bodies*', in certain punk and feminist spaces she feels comfortable with her scars visible, when she would not in other non-punk spaces. Evelyn finds that some spaces feel more accepting, understanding and supportive than others. Though she asserted that she does not want to, or think she should, feel embarrassed or ashamed of scars on her body or why they are there, there are some spaces where she feels embarrassed as a result of others' reactions, and other punk spaces where she does not. Bessa also described feeling more comfortable with their body as a result of engaging with body-positive ideas and politics through their involvement in DIY and DIY punk culture (see 6.4).

I used to shave my legs and arm pits due to perceived (and experienced) societal pressure, but after seeing women with body hair, I started to consider the inconvenience of shaving as unnecessary, if it was not something I was doing for myself. I then read about societal expectations and restrictions, I heard more about feminism and body-positivity in song lyrics and the rejection of these expectations began to seem achievable. So through experiencing DIY punk spaces, the pressure to remove body hair was alleviated to a point where I felt comfortable not shaving and having my body hair visible. These cases support a multi-layered and multi-scalar understanding of resistance as participants utilise the body as a site of resistance and social norm deconstruction (see 2.1.2 and 4.4). We then see interconnections between feminism and punk (also seen in 2.2 discussion about feminism, punk and Riot Grrrl), which can inspire and influence people's relationships with their bodies, encouraging social change at different inter-linking scales.

The presence of queer and feminist politics within punk spaces, and the changes in attitude and practice that snowball from it, further reflects the intersecting of alternative culture and politics in DIY punk spaces. Although feelings of comfort

in punk spaces can vary widely, depending on individuals present, personal identities and scene specificities (see 6.3), Evelyn, Denis, Daphne and Cheryl described a political process of changing how they felt about themselves and their bodies through DIY punk's connections with feminist and queer politics and identities. Participants recalled generally feeling more comfortable with self-expression in punk spaces. The development of these alternative ways of thinking about the self and body positivity are exemplary of the proliferation of political and cultural ideas within DIY punk spaces.

Participants expressed expectations of punk adherence to certain political ideals as a result of the political interconnectedness of DIY. Notions of compassion, self-critique and development, and autonomy are fundamental to these connections. Chris expressed that punks tend to be *'politically correct, or have a general political awareness, at least.'* Several participants specifically expressed how they expect there to be an absence of sexism in punk spaces, despite their experiences with it on occasion. Beth explained that she is surprised when she encounters sexism in DIY punk. She elaborated that though not everyone in the punk scene has the same political viewpoint, there is a general political positioning within DIY punk that is 'lefty/liberal'. But she used sexism as an example of where there is conflict within her scene: *'Not to say that everyone within the scene believes the same thing, because they definitely don't. There's definitely still sexism within the scene.'* Yet, Beth later clarified that despite the presence of sexism, there is a general political leaning associated with the scene than she is part of, *'As a whole ... people tend to be on the same wavelength'*, illustrating different levels of commitment to, and immersion in, a DIY punk culture and ethic that is anti-sexist. She also later proposed that sexism in punk *'doesn't really fit'*. For Beth, within punk as a social phenomenon, participants *should* not encounter sexism. She indicated that punks should know better, as DIY punk is an inherently political social phenomenon, for which equality and respect are fundamental. So, when Beth confronts sexist attitudes and behaviours she feels there is a disconnection between what she sees as fundamentally punk and what can occur in punk spaces. The disconnection that Beth identified illustrates the

diversity and idiosyncrasies of punk and how different people can relate to punk (further explored in Chapter 6). Participants' expectations of an absence of oppressive behavioural practices vary, depending on space and scene, either localised scenes or more imagined scenes, which are more abstract and transcend physical boundaries, such as the 'queer punk scene' (see 5.2). Yet there remain some consistent expectations.

Due to the complex political patchwork of DIY punk ethics and politics, it is useful to consider how different ideologies coalesce within DIY punk cultural spaces (physical, virtual and imagined) and engagement with different overlapping political and social movements create gateways to alternative and new ways of thinking, being and doing. The inter-connections, illustrated through this research, reflect a coalescence of ideology, politics and ethics, which participants may or may not be exposed to, or may or may not engage with, but the interconnections are evidenced in the findings. Participants described finding DIY through their interest in certain ideologies and politics and they also described finding out about alternative ideologies and politics, through involvement in DIY. For Daphne, her interest in feminism was a gateway to DIY culture, as a result of the involvement of feminists in her local DIY punk scene.

*Daphne: I think the entry point was through feminism. And speaking to Feminists kind of leads, in [home-town], to this.*

Conversely, Peter discovered DIY through band lyrics, which led to other ideologies,

*Peter:... and then other bands got us<sup>38</sup> into other ideologies by listening to them and looking at the lyrics and stuff like that. ... such as anti-establishment and stuff like that. And,vegan and vegetarian.*

Participants described various encounters that had encouraged different or new ways of thinking, being and doing, which have since influenced their ethics.

Participants discussed politics represented in song lyrics, band merchandise, promotional material, and in events organised to raise money for political and

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<sup>38</sup> Peter uses 'us' here instead of 'me' to refer to himself; a North Eastern colloquialism.

activist groups, consistent with Culton and Holtzman's (2010) findings. Peter and Samantha both explain that although their interest in DIY punk is motivated by an interest in music, they feel that a commitment to politics and ideologies, represented by the punk bands that they like, is more compelling than the music style or quality,

*Peter: ... there's people who go to DIY shows for the music and then there's people who then go for the ideologies and stuff like that. But yeah, I'm definitely one more for the ideologies than the music behind it.*

*Samantha: I think personally the reason I'm involved in DIY punk is really largely rooted in music and crosses over a lot into politics and I got involved in DIY because I wanted to do something for myself.*

Peter and Samantha value the new and alternative ways of thinking, found through DIY punk music, as a strong factor in their dedication to DIY punk. Daphne similarly explained that learning about alternative ways of thinking leads to different ideological influences within DIY,

*Daphne: Veganism, vegetarianism, capitalism, communism, anti-sexism, consent, basically everything, so you know? Self-image. So that's like human relationships, then human-society relationships, and human-animal relationships. So it's all the ways you interact with the world.*

The data illustrates the politicising effect of DIY punk culture on participants, supporting Moore and Roberts' (2009) argument that punk identity may initially be the result of interest in music and style, but can become mobilised into political action through DIY as a politicised cultural field. This research develops Moore and Roberts' (2009) assertion further, by illustrating the overlapping political and cultural fields that exist within and through DIY culture in more depth, as participants described finding DIY through other political and social encounters and engagements, as well as discovering new ways of thinking politically through DIY punk participation. So, DIY represents a complex political, social and cultural field through which participants discovered alternative ways of thinking, doing and being through political and cultural inter-connections.

The proliferation of personal political commitments, through participation in DIY punk culture, described by participants, can be attributed to processes of



collective realisations of different struggles. Such realisations reflect a dynamic and ongoing process of collective consciousness. Collective (or shared) consciousness describes shared beliefs, attitudes and morals that are agreed through collective realisations, re-imaginings and re-evaluations responding to experiences, interests and opportunities (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Taylor & Whittier, 1999). The process of collective consciousness on a small scale, such as that of this research, is contingent on individuals, interactions, serendipity and smaller-scale cultural development (see 5.2.2 for more discussion of scene specificities with relation to place), but connected to a wider collective DIY and DIY punk consciousness. This research illustrates that a definitively coherent and incontestable DIY ethic is not possible, as collective consciousness creation is a non-linear process, yet connections between DIY and other political beliefs, actions and movements are clear and are significant to how DIY culture is produced, performed and maintained.

#### **4.3.3 '*Do it yourself 'cause no one else will'*: dissatisfaction, autonomy and creativity**

Key themes emerging from participant accounts include creativity and autonomy as significant to a DIY ethic and DIY punk participation. This section adds to understanding of DIY culture, by exploring the significance of feelings of dissatisfaction and desires for alternative cultures and autonomy. A DIY ethic acts as a driving force for mobilisation and punk cultural production, encouraging people to act autonomously to create and sustain punk culture. This finding is consistent with Moore and Roberts' (2009) assertion that a DIY ethic acts as a 'mechanism' for mobilisation. 'Mechanism' implies a system of components working together in a process. Processes of cultural production that produce political actions, identities and communities, are evidenced. The data shows that DIY cultural production can result from dissatisfaction with 'mainstream' culture, or what is available in the town, or area, where participants live, combined with opportunities and autonomy that DIY encourages. Social and geographical context play a significant role in the formation and sustenance of DIY punk

culture. This section then concludes with a discussion about the role of place in understanding participant dissatisfactions, creativity and autonomy.

In 'Do it Yourself', the 'it' is aided by a sense of autonomy, as well as opportunities and abilities created by knowledge-sharing through community,

*Daphne: The general thing that it means to – to laymen – building a house on your own or a shed. But what it means to people who I've met who are part of a DIY scene it's a completely different thing. Learning to do things yourself so you don't have to rely on outside forces to do it for you, who'll dictate the rules for how you do it, who accesses it and how they can access it. So there's a lot more freedom to have your own goals for the stuff that you're doing. It doesn't have to be profit based and it doesn't have to have any sort of monetary implications. It's much more community based and focuses on the art itself.*

Daphne's motivation to do something 'for herself' illustrates a desire for autonomy to enable her to create and do things that she would not have done, if she had not found her DIY scene.

Autonomy is enacted when participants realise opportunities to 'do it themselves',

*Jake: It comes under the idea that you're responsible for what you do and you're not relying on others. Well, you can rely on others, but in a better way.*

Samantha's belief in autonomy and personal responsibility encourages her to be involved in DIY because she wants to and feels able to create spaces for activities and people that would not otherwise be available. She wants to support punk bands and be able to meet other people who she shares interests with and so strives to make that happen.

*Samantha: I believe in autonomy and responsibility for the person and interpersonally*

Participants described a desire for autonomy from 'mainstream' cultural influences and pressures and mainstream music industry practices. For Bessa, an important part of being a DIY musician is organising and coordinating musicians' own music releases and tours,

*Bessa: I mean it's, I guess, DIY punk culture is things like putting out your own CDs, your own patches, booking your own shows, your own tour... Not working with 'middle men'...*

Not working with 'middle men' for Bessa means not dealing with managers or booking agents, who would take a cut of what is earned by the band and exert influence over what shows they play, and possibly have a restricting impact on their musical style or aesthetic. They go on to explain that a lack of 'middle men' means more freedom for the artist, who is also not being driven by profit and what sells. For Bessa this allows greater artistic freedom,

*Bessa: And DIY for me means you're not waiting to get signed or waiting for this big break, and it's quite liberating because then you can just be like 'I can do this myself', and 'I can record my own songs' and you can put it out yourself and charge a fair price, and there's not kind of 'oh, talk to my manager' or 'wait for the album to come out in stores'.*

Bessa explained that 'not waiting to be signed' has a liberating impact on creativity, as well as having an impact on the social relations between bands and fans.

*Bessa: And I think it breaks down that barrier as well of 'audience' and 'bands', where you can actually be friends and you don't have, like, a fan club mailing address, you can actually write to them, talk to them and become friends with them.*

In a 2012 interview with Ian Mackaye<sup>39</sup>, of Washington DC's Dischord Records and the bands Minor Threat and Fugazi (among others), Mackaye touched on an advantage of employing a DIY ethic when he wanted to release music by his own bands as people have more control and freedom for creativity when they 'do it yourself',

*With Fugazi we always just did it ourselves. And that way we know. We know that it's, like, done the way we wanna do it. It won't be exploited. It'll just be what we wanted which is to make the stuff available.*

Mackaye discusses his concerns with work being taken on or bought by other entities, as the artists can no longer control how their work will be used or who will make money from the work, giving the example that he gets 'vexed' by

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h47CWPXHIQ> Ian Mackaye (2012) interview courtesy of the US Institute of Museum and Library Services

advertising. More corporate forms of advertising, music production and promotion are avoided when subscribing to a DIY ethic. Therefore the desire for, and realisation of autonomy, are fundamental, as Dale (2008) argued.

This research shows that participants were also often motivated to act autonomously with the attitude *'if I don't do it, who else will?'* This familiar motivation was also expressed by Mackaye (2012) when he explained that he started the label because he wanted to release a record, and that starting a label to do so seemed to make sense,

*Yesterday I did an interview and somebody said 'so why did you decide to start your own label?' But, it's because nobody else was gunna put the record out. It was just obvious.*

Participants take responsibility for producing DIY spaces (temporary and more permanent), encouraging the creation of activities, communities and identities in participants' own visions. Such dissatisfaction with what else is available in participants' locality or what is represented in dominant culture, motivate action and participation. A friend, Sarah, explained her desire to create spaces and events in her small town for people 'like her',

*Sarah: ..you gotta make your own fun in this town. Otherwise there'd be nothing for us*

The process of culturally producing spaces, communities and identities, based on a DIY ethic, reflects participants enacting the world they want to see. This is evidence of what other studies have conceptualised as producing culture 'prefiguratively' (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009).

Circumstance is also a factor to consider in DIY mobilisation and action. Chris's anecdote about starting Plan-it-X records illustrates that Chris and his friend Sam wanted to produce a tape cassette of their band's music, so they made up a name for their record label when they were in the print shop making covers for their cassettes. Chris started the story of his record label with the line; *'it started as a joke in 1994.'* I asked him to clarify what the joke was,

Chris: *We were just literally in the copy shop in the middle of the night, a 24hr copy shop, making the covers for my band's first cassette release and then my friend Sam said 'we should put a record label on the back' and so we were like 'yeah, that would be cool'. So then Sam called it Plan-it-X, drew a little logo and somehow we had started a record label that night.*

Chris emphasised that starting a record label happened very much in the moment and impulsively: *'The thought hadn't crossed our minds before.'* The label started circumstantially and on a whim initially, motivated by a desire to get their music heard and partly a joke, and then it grew from there as they heard more bands that they wanted to help get heard too. He explained that the label did not expand to other bands until 1997. Chris went on to explain that he had limited knowledge about punk at the time of setting up the label, but had heard of Dischord Records. Although they had not planned to start a label and were unsure about what they were doing, they were partly inspired by Dischord's commitment to keeping things cheap,

Chris: *I didn't know anyone else that had ever released a record, or gone on a tour, or who even called themselves punk... We knew about Dischord Records in Washington DC and we really thought it was cool that they put the thing on the back of all their old albums that said 'pay no more than \$8 for this record'... That was probably the only, the smallest part of our inspiration.*

They did not start the label because *'no one else would'* (though they did not expect that anyone else would). They started it primarily for fun and through hearing about others acting in a similarly autonomous way, which then introduced Chris and Sam to a culture that they previously did not know existed. The label has since been hugely influential in DIY punk and has released music and been involved in tours, and has been promoting a DIY ethic for years. The combination of factors described by Chris, and the subsequent growth and success of the label, illustrate the role of serendipity and circumstance, on participants acting autonomously through DIY cultural production and action.

A research theme significant to DIY and autonomy is that of place. Place is fundamental to how DIY punk cultural production manifests. Opportunities for participation and participant dissatisfaction with current cultural potentialities are

tied to place. Beth had lived in a small town and a big city and compared the challenges of punk activity in both, as what is available is different. In a big city a show can be competing with three other shows in the same city on the same night, as opposed to being the only show that week in the whole town. For Samantha, a big city may offer many opportunities for 'punk' activity, but not necessarily the sort of punk scene, community or identity that she is interested in,

*Samantha: So these people turned up to our shows not because they super liked the band but because they were grateful for something to do in a city where there's so much to do but not for people, I'll put in inverted commas, 'like us', who just want to eat vegan food and stroke animals and high five all the time.*

In smaller towns, a scene can be significantly affected by the availability of a suitable venue for punk activity. A scene can be born, nurtured, or forced to diminish based on venue availability. In a small town or a town with limited suitable spaces for punk activity, if a venue is booked then a show may not take place. If a few show-going regulars are out of town, the show will be affected.

Peter's decision to 'get the scene up and running again' was the result of place and scene specificities and history. Peter explained that, in the city where he lives, there had been a big dip in the activity of his local hardcore punk music scene, for a while. At one time the scene was thriving but had suffered when a local venue shut down. Frustrated with the lack of hardcore shows in his area and the 'fizzling out' of an active hardcore scene, he decided he wanted to do something about it; so he set up a group to try to get people interested in putting on and attending hardcore punk shows in his town. As Peter put it,

*I wanted to get the punk and hardcore scene back on its feet so I thought 'yeah, I'll start putting on shows.*

Desire, necessity and learning what is possible, through seeing others 'doing it themselves', encouraged Peter to act autonomously, but he was also influenced by local punk cultural history and scene fluctuations. In setting up the group and starting to put on his own shows, Peter expressed autonomy. From his

experience of going to DIY punk shows when he was younger, he was familiar with the ethic and had seen that a thriving hardcore scene was possible in his small town. Dissatisfied with the decline of this scene, he took it upon himself to organise a form of revival. Dissatisfaction, recognising that something was missing in his town and a sense of autonomy, which he associates with a commitment to a DIY punk ethic, then encouraged his creativity and interest in maintaining punk cultural production.

Denise's involvement in organising and baking for a monthly vegan café was partially motivated by the lack of any vegetarian or vegan cafés or restaurants locally. The cafe organisers' rationale, as punk show promoters, was to support a local community centre and also provide an activity for like-minded people that did not rely on music (as music interest is dependent on individual tastes). It would also provide something to do on an otherwise quiet day in a small town (one Sunday per month). Denise explained that connections were made with others who were like-minded, but who might not have been interested in attending shows.

*Denise: We made connections with other community groups in the area doing things with similar ethics that we might not have come into contact with otherwise.*

Place in this context was fundamental, as '*small-town melancholia*' initially led to the group of friends setting up a collective to organise events, followed by a lack of anywhere to congregate that was not a show venue. The small-town context also accounts for a lack of another cafe that had vegan options available, so the group identified a gap. Finally, the success of the cafe was partly credited to the community centre's central location and accessibility.

*Denise: We wanted to do something different... We wanted to be able to hang out somewhere that was chilled out and where we could actually eat the food*

The creation of these non-music spaces, which happens through DIY punk culture, also helps nurture a sense of community, (discussed in Chapter 5).

Place is fundamental to my own DIY punk cultural activity, identity and

commitment, and my commitment to, and involvement in, DIY punk in my hometown affects my relationship with place. I feel very proud of where I am from and the local scene that I am involved in. For many years, I and others in my small hometown have aimed to make our town a place that other punks want to visit. It previously may have been overlooked by touring bands, but now has a reputation for good shows. I feel pride if a band is touring the UK and actively seeks out a show in the town, especially if that band does not plan to do many shows in the UK and is travelling from outside of the UK. As a friend (partly in jest) said, '*we put our town on the 'punk map' \*laughs\**'.

A DIY ethic motivates participants to take charge of their own cultural activity and identity, through attempts to create cultural alternatives. This supports Spencer's (2008, p.11) argument that '*the DIY movement is about using anything you can get your hands on to shape your own cultural entity; your own version of whatever you think is missing in mainstream culture*'. These analyses are further supported by my findings and participant accounts of what DIY means to them. This research supports literature that recognises that a DIY ethic encourages autonomy (Beaver, 2012; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Downes 2012; Moran, 2010; Trapeze-Collective, 2007), and extends those discussions, by demonstrating that a belief in or aspiration for autonomy encourages DIY action. DIY cultural production and participation is linked to dissatisfaction with what is otherwise available and a desire to create something new or different. DIY motivates participants in the production of cultural spaces and activities that would not otherwise take place. DIY punk approaches to music production and promotion, motivated by autonomy, creativity and collaboration, provide an alternative to, and subvert, the capitalist nature of dominant music industries (Haenfler, 2006). As well as aspiring to create DIY punk spaces and events, because the activity is fun and rewarding, participants attributed their commitment to creating or helping to create DIY punk spaces to their dissatisfaction with what else was on offer locally. Finally, it is clear that place is significant to understanding scene formation, fluctuation, and continuation. How participants discover DIY punk culture, how they experience DIY culture (their



expectations and feelings in punk spaces), how they identify with punk, is affected by scene specificities and place (also 5.2.3). This thesis considers the role of place in punk community more explicitly in 5.2. Next I consider 'activism' as a useful concept for understanding DIY punk cultural production.

#### **4.4 DIY punk cultural production as activism**

Activism as a concept has been contested by several academics in recent years. In 2.1, I argued that activism is complex and cannot be adequately conceptualised as only larger scale, confrontational action that targets formal organisations and structures. The DIY punk cultural production explored in this research illustrates that activism exists at different scales including the personal level, recognising the role of everyday and individual actions and behaviours in altering culture and society. 2.1 illustrated that activism can be seen as more than resistance, as productive, as oppositional and non-oppositional, cultural and political and is, therefore, a useful concept to explain the complex phenomena of DIY punk political tactics (as more than resistant). It is then my assertion that activism's malleability in definition makes it a useful concept to describe DIY punk praxis.

This research supports Haenfler's (2004b) assertion that resistance is multi-layered, as in one site at one time participants can be individually and collectively targeting micro, meso and macro level structures and inequalities (levels Haenfler, 2004, distinguished). The personal bodily ways of rejecting societal expectations that Daphne, Denis, Cheryl, Evelyn and Bessa associated with their involvement in DIY punk (4.2.2) provide examples of resistance at a personal, corporeal level that connects to broader societal systems of oppression. The examples support both the feminist assertion that the personal is political and that activism as multi-scalar, as participants use their own bodies to challenge societal norms (see 2.1 and Carpenter, 2006; Colls, 2010 and Pitts, 2003, for examples of corporeal resistance in non-DIY punk contexts). Individual corporeal practices connecting to a DIY ethic and movement, illustrate how resistance can happen

at multiple interlinking scales. Yet, the examples in the chapter support an analysis that recognises DIY punk praxis as activism that is more than resistant.

Conceptualising 'DIY punk praxis' as activist helps resolve debates about how to conceptualise punk resistance, as there is a tendency to either assume punk is wholly resistant, or to disregard punk as resistance altogether (Nicholas, 2005) (as highlighted in 2.1.2 and 2.3.1). Activism, unlike resistance, can describe praxis that is not necessarily oppositional (Aune & Redfern, 2011), cultural activism is not always opposing or confrontational, particularly considering the significance of creating new and alternative ideas and ways of thinking and being. As seen in this chapter's vignette, within punk spaces there are alternative ideas and ways of being, which are sometimes oppositional and resistant, but may also be creative and involve sharing ideas and knowledge, or both. Participants utilise various tactics that promote and reify an interconnected DIY ethic (discussed in 4.2) and build community and collectivity (see Chapter 5) in the production of DIY punk culture.

The research supports Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) argument that everyday practices can provide building blocks to the creation of 'hoped-for futures'. These building blocks are not necessarily always resistant, and so DIY cultural production is more than multi-layered resistance. Through DIY's interconnected ethics, individual and collective, participants are attempting to create the culture and society they wish to see. Processes of prefigurative DIY punk cultural production are complex and multi-faceted (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009, see 2.1.2 & 2.2.2), and so are better understood as activism than resistance.

In recognising activism as more than oppositional (see 2.1.2), we see that DIY punk does not just illustrate resistance as multi-layered, but that more than resistance is happening in DIY punk spaces. So, DIY punk culture is representative of activism that is multi-layered, multi-scalar, and also illustrates

activism as more than resistant and oppositional. DIY punk culture involves the production of alternative ways of doing and being. DIY punk is a diffuse movement that is complex, fluid, unbounded and diverse. I further assert that DIY punk praxis helps to put forward a sharper and more useful definition of activism, which recognises diversity in activism, while also supporting activism as a meaningful concept. This analysis shows that activism can be defined in a broad and inclusive way, while retaining meaning.

## 4.5 Conclusions

Consistent with Moran's (2010) research, this study found that the core of DIY is not reducible to anti-capitalism or anti-consumerism. Participants confirmed a meaning of DIY that focused on DIY as anti-capitalist, but also as a mechanism that encourages autonomy and responsibility. DIY ethics intertwined with their personal philosophies. The data illustrates the '*rich veins of thought*' (Trapese Collective, 2007, p.7) that run through DIY culture, in a DIY punk context, through participant expressions of what a DIY ethic means to them. Participants described a DIY punk ethic that connects a wealth of values that they held. This chapter illustrates the meaning of DIY to participants as connected to numerous political values beyond anti-capitalism. This suggests that it is useful to consider DIY as an anti-capitalist ethic and also as a mechanism, in Moore and Roberts' (2009) sense, which encourages autonomy, critical thinking and creativity, and can lead to engagement with certain politics and values. Although there was cross-over and commonalities, there was not full agreement on what DIY is or should be, and participants varied in ethical and political priorities and in levels commitment to, and immersion in, DIY punk ethics and culture (which can lead to tensions, discussed in more depth Chapter 6). This illustrates DIY punk cultural production as complex, messy and sometimes contradictory, as Chatterton & Pickerill (2010) found in other types of autonomous activism.

Autonomy and critical thinking were key to understanding my participants' relationships with DIY, which influenced their political and cultural values and identities. The core value of DIY for Moran's (2010) participants was freedom and

thinking for yourself, which has resonance with my findings. Due to disparities in participant interpretations of 'punk values', it is not possible to draw direct correlations between the different ideological and political values of participants, but a general sense of collective consciousness was clear. The key themes connecting participants' ideological and ethical commitments are autonomy, creativity, collectivity (including ethics of inclusivity), knowledge-sharing, equality, community and anti-capitalist principles and organising around these principles. DIY punk participants are creating spaces where these ideas are at the core, feeling part of a community in which political ideas are discussed and providing alternatives to what would be available otherwise. Cultural production was also dependant on participants responding to opportunity and necessity, when faced with a lack of cultural opportunities, representations, and spaces that they felt reflected them. The research shows that DIY punk is more than resistance and suggests that it is useful to look at DIY punk cultural production within a broader definition of activism. The research found that activism is a useful concept to describe DIY punk cultural production as more than resistance, and DIY punk cultural production helps to deepen the meaning of the fluid and amorphous concept of 'activism'.

## **5.0 The role of community and belonging in DIY punk activisms**

Having analysed DIY punk ethics, attempts to apply DIY ethics in practice, and cultural production as activism, I now explore the role of community and belonging as fundamental to understanding DIY cultural production. Participants struggled, beyond talking about the pursuit of alternatives to mainstream culture, to articulate exactly what DIY participation means to them and what drives their continued involvement. To understand how DIY works, the research suggests the need to address more internal and less tangible aspects of DIY cultural participation.

Recognising the practical, physical and social networks that allow DIY punk to continue, I explore the role that community plays in facilitating DIY punk cultural production, including the personal and interpersonal aspects of these networks and participant relationships. This chapter's vignette introduces themes of belonging, networks of support, multi-layered and multi-scalar community and resistance to negative aspects of dominant culture, through the construction and strengthening of DIY punk community. This research found that to understand what drives the DIY movement, it is as important to consider the personal, and the interpersonal, particularly regarding community and belonging, as it is to consider political aims.

This chapter demonstrates how DIY is a mechanism (in Moore and Roberts' (2009) sense) for collectivity and community, through friendships and networks built on trust (Moran, 2010) and reciprocity. I contribute here to the literature on punk community by exploring what community means in the context of this research, developing a definition that recognises DIY punk communities as imagined and globally connected, while retaining a sensitivity to place. This chapter also contributes to the literature through consideration of the direct aims

to create alternative communities that support the production of alternative cultures, and consideration of how DIY punk community, in turn, nurtures cultural production. This chapter also sheds light upon the interconnections between individuals and community.

### **5.1 Vignette 2: 'All we got is each other'**

*Sitting on the couch in a friend's house, I offer to help put up a banner that they had sewn in preparation for a show at the house that night. The banner is made from an old bed sheet and covers most of one of the walls in the living room. It says 'ALL PUNX GOT IS EACH OTHER'.*

*The show attendance is small (approximately 15 to 20 people), with only quiet acoustic acts playing. The audience are all, at least, acquaintances of someone else at the show. It has a very comfortable feel for me, mostly because I know most of the people there, I have met the performers before and I am in a house I am familiar with. They are all people I know through my involvement in punk.*

*The banner was inspired by the makers' experience at a festival that a few of us had been to the year before (2012) in Bloomington, Indiana called 'Plan-It-X Fest'. Particularly inspired by an emotive performance by the band 'Your Heart Breaks' and several other bands, at the festival, collectively singing 'all we got is each other'<sup>40</sup>. The performance was dedicated to a friend and co-founder of Plan-It-X records, Samantha Jane Dorsett (Sam), who had died since the last festival. The performers wanted to remember and celebrate what Sam had done for Plan-It-X Fest and the DIY punk community in general. They also wanted to recognise the discrimination she had faced in her life for many reasons (particularly because she was transgender) and the need to keep fighting discrimination in her memory, to fight for a fairer and more inclusive world. The lyrics include,*

*'We have lost another sister lost one more survivor, we have lost an*

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<sup>40</sup> 'All we got is each other' is also an LP/cassette release by the band Ghost Mice, of which Chris Clavin is a member.

*anarchist, a feminist, a strong fighter, we have lost another queer, another punk, another friend, we are not doing enough, our support must never end' (Troubled Sleep (Could One Letter Save Your Life) by Your Heart Breaks)*

*This DIY punk festival was organised by Plan-It-X records (and many friends) as a celebration of DIY punk, to raise money for local charities and also to strengthen punk community. In the description of the event, the organisers said,*

*'We want to stress what is already known, that PIX FEST is more than watching a bunch of bands. It's a chance for the goof punks, nerds, queers, shy kids, anarchists that don't look like anarchists, weirdos, kids that don't fit in to the other subcultures, P.C. punks and all the other hoodie punks to get together and make friends and strengthen our community.'* (Plan-It-X Fest, 2012).

*The banner being pinned up in a house in a city thousands of miles away represents international community belonging, despite distance and specificities of scene and place. It also shows solidarity with those who have felt like outsiders in their lives, strengthening a sense belonging, through the construction of a diverse and inclusive community. Reference to Sam's story acts a reminder to participants of the importance of support and inclusivity in DIY punk community and the need to challenge prejudice within and through DIY punk cultural production.*

Attending the festival described in this vignette made me realise how conceptually complex, yet significant, the DIY punk community is. It takes work to create, is emotional for participants, and is bound up in feelings of belonging against adversity. The quote from Plan-It-X Fest provides an example of how participants are narratively constructing community and identity, based on ethics, as well as feeling bonded by lack of belonging elsewhere, including other punk subcultures (see also, 5.3.1). The vignette illustrates the locally specific yet global connectedness of DIY punk community, supporting the possibility of movements that are not just local but also, not quite transnational (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010) and consistent with Massey's (1998) assertion that youth cultures are

neither 'closed local cultures' nor 'undifferentiatedly global cultures'. They are both and they are somewhere in-between. There are intense individual and personal relationships but these individuals and their experiences strengthen collectivities. DIY punk community works to strengthen DIY punk cultural production and the production of hoped-for futures in the present (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010).

## **5.2 Understanding community in a DIY punk context**

Community emerges as a strong theme and is vital to understanding what DIY means to the participants of this research. All participants referred to a punk community or multiple punk communities and references to community were prevalent in observations. To understand community in a DIY punk context, it is necessary to clarify how the notion of community is used by participants, why it is used, and what participants' notions of community enable (in line with the epistemology of this research project). Community is a largely contested concept academically (see 2.3.3) but remains a useful concept for participants to articulate their relationship with DIY punk. O'Connor (2008) critiques the use of community in a punk context as punk is too large and broad to justify the presence of a coherent punk community. However, this thesis argues that the concept of community, when applied appropriately, can harness the complexity of DIY punk by consolidating meaning and experience for participants.

Some participants situate DIY punk culture within a broader punk scene, as a more political subculture, while others see DIY punk as part of a broader DIY scene (DIY activism that extends beyond punk culture), perceiving non-DIY punk as entirely distinct from DIY culture. For example, Beth described punk as inherently DIY, and situates punk within a broader '*alternative scene*'. Similarly, some participants see their punk community as tied to their specific locality and actions, but generally also connect their actions and commitment to DIY principles to an international community. The emphasis that participants put on DIY punk 'community' is significant and supports a focus on community in the



thesis. The research also suggests that a focus on community is helpful in overcoming disparities in how DIY punk participation should be framed (for example, as a subculture, a scene, a movement, or a 'post-modern tribe' (see 2.3) by focusing on the interactions that occur with and through the concept of community, as a concept that is significant to participants and participation. Some participants are rigid when defining the boundaries of their communities and others are less so. To understand community in a DIY punk context, it is necessary to engage with fluid and multiple conceptions of community. It is necessary to understand community in a DIY punk context, to explore the importance of community as a driving force for action for participants.

My analysis recognises community as a contested concept (see 2.3.3) but also highlights the frequency with which participants use the concept and its meaningfulness to them. This thesis, therefore, proposes a definition of community in a DIY punk context, based on participant accounts, which is also academically robust. A complex notion of community helps to cement the rich meaning and connections that participants have with punk, despite its diffuseness and diversity. I have identified three aspects of 'community' in a DIY punk context through the empirical research: DIY punk community as imagined (in participants' own image), the significance of place in DIY punk community, and community as multi-layered.

### **5.2.1 DIY punk community as imagined**

DIY is conceptualised, by Moore and Roberts (2009, p.288), as an ethic that acts as a mechanism for action '*by providing a foundation for the creation of imagined communities*'. I found that research participants used this foundation to map out their own boundaries in relation to their identities, relationships and sense of belonging. Much like an imagined community in Anderson's (1991) sense, participants are active in constructing their imagined communities. This thesis' conceptualisation of DIY punk as producing 'imagined communities' utilises work on punk as a 'field' (O'Connor, 2008, Moore, 2007) rather than a subculture, and

Moore and Roberts' (2009) work on a DIY ethic as a mechanism for mobilisation, emphasising what action is possible through punk, rather than trying to define what counts as punk.

Participants strengthened their sense of community through discussions about DIY punk community, reinforcing a sense of belonging. Participants narratively construct their own communities, imagining and reimagining the boundaries of these communities in complex ways, which are individual and collective. Jake used a sense of community as a way to differentiate between DIY (punk) shows and non-DIY shows, when explaining how he became involved in DIY and why it appealed to him,

*Jake: The fans who go to the [non-DIY] shows, it wasn't really a community. Then I'd go to DIY shows and people would talk to each other rather than just go to one show to get drunk and try to look better than other people. And I didn't feel like that was the case in DIY music*

Politically, Peter draws boundaries around who he considers part of his community in relation to DIY practices. He illustrated this when discussing whether or not a band, at one of the shows he talked about, had remained DIY. He identified a difference between the band remaining ideologically anti-capitalist and sticking to DIY principles in practice, and through this he identified what he meant by his community,

*Peter: You get a lot of different people at shows and stuff, so it's a good mix and it's a community. So you make friends from that. Whether you're on the same wavelength or not ... But I mean, that's sort of part of the community. I mean, not everyone's going to be exactly the same.*

Community, in a DIY punk context, relies on a sense of belonging rooted in a collective commitment to complexly interwoven DIY ethics and praxis. As shown in the previous chapter, participants vary in ethical priorities and levels of commitment to, and immersion in, DIY punk culture; but Peter explains that that is the nature of community. Peter describes a felt sense of collectivity, tied (albeit it sometimes loosely) to certain ethics and practices, which nurture a sense of community.

One aspect of the appeal of DIY punk participation are the opportunities it offers to express alternative identities. As discussed in 2.3.3, subcultures (and 'youth' cultures) and involve the 'carving out' of local spaces in the vision of those within the subculture or group, for themselves (Massey, 1998). Chris claimed that DIY punk allows the freedom to make social space for yourself, where you feel you can be who you want to be,

*Chris: ....and it's just nice, you know, to have a social group that you can pretty much make your own spot to fit inside of. You know? I think that's the big appeal for like nerds and punks. It's like 'well I don't fit into these categories, but this category I can make myself, pretty much.' And that's part of the appeal of DIY too. ...I think the beauty of DIY is people get to make their own spots.*

Participants (or 'punks' or 'nerds') feel a sense of belonging through actively seeking out, or seeking to create, social and cultural spaces into which they feel they belong. These spaces are physical but also imagined.

Samantha and Evelyn's sense of community is based on feeling part of a group of people with similar ideological positions, who make similar ethical life choices. Evelyn explained that her involvement in DIY punk culture has allowed her to make like-minded friends and to be selective in who she spends time with, including who she wants to be in a band with:

*Evelyn: I've managed to construct a social life where I don't have to spend time with people who I'm not on the same wavelength as, for most things at least, so I don't want to have to compromise on that for the band.*

Evelyn also explained that it is important that the band agree on certain issues (in relation to animal rights, feminism and attitudes towards mental health issues), as she wishes to write songs about sensitive and personal subjects, so it is important that her creative space is one in which she feels comfortable expressing herself. The development of identities, scenes, cultures and actions can be understood as partly based on personal desires to belong on your own terms, supported by the social and cultural connections that are available through interaction with, and production of, DIY punk culture.

Research participants noted the significance of technological developments to

their networking and communications, such as social networking sites, online fanzines, music sharing sites, and email, which have made it easier for punks to connect with each other and share information; encouraging and enabling DIY punk organising and actions (see also Moran, 2010 and Dale, 2008). As well as supporting the practical organising of DIY punk events, participants also explained the strengthening of a global community felt through interactions online. Bessa describes making several punk pen-pals through online interactions, who they had then visited. Evelyn described support that she feels from online DIY punk resources and publications (such as music, zines, comics and blog posts) and discussions (even when she is not involved in them).

Experiencing connection with 'like-minded' punks, who have similarly engaged with DIY culture and ethics online, helps to strengthen a sense of a DIY punk imagined community as across spatial, geographical and place boundaries. As a diffuse movement, imagined punk communities strengthen and support commitment and participation. So, consistent with Haenfler's (2004a) finding on straight edge, collective identity and collective consciousness are key to punk community. Collective identity and collective consciousness strengthen a sense of imagined community, which works to bind DIY punk as a globally diffuse movement.

### **5.2.2 DIY punk community and place**

DIY participants express an imagined sense of community based on musical, political, social and ideological connections and interests. Still, place remains significant in developing understanding of community in a DIY punk context. The creation of local DIY punk spaces and communities, while connected to wider networks of cultures and communities, depends upon local, interpersonal, and place-based specificities.

Punk participation and cultural production is dependent on opportunities,

attitudes and aims that relate to place (as illustrated in 4.3.3). Participant engagements with a notion of community are also dependant on these specificities. Peter's commitment to his local punk scene and community is dependent on a rich local punk history. He described the changes in the punk scene in the North East and his aims to build a stronger and more vibrant scene, through the development and promotion of a community project called 'The BearCru'. Peter described The BearCru as a community venture that existed in the early 2000s, based on a punk identity and pride in living in the North of England, which predominantly organised hardcore punk shows. Peter wishes to re-ignite this venture,

*Peter: Basically, it was sort of more of a community thing... it was sort of an identity. Break it Up had it on the back of their shirts. It was a bit of an identity to say 'we're from the North' and ... 'we're proud to be from the North' because it was really good for shows then. ... It wasn't a promotional company. Well 'company' \*laughs\*, you know, that put on shows. It was more of an identity... it's a community-based identity.*

The BearCru developed through a sense of local DIY punk community and a commitment to DIY punk. Peter intends to build and strengthen his local scene through strengthening identity and community, based on his own and his friends' current vision for a vibrant scene and their notion of a better and stronger past local scene. One of the key factors that damaged the scene before, in Peter's view, was the decision by the main venue used for hardcore punk shows not to allow shows to be held there any longer, after fireworks were set off indoors at a show. Though Peter described a strong sense of community, the lack of a suitable venue, or space for participants to congregate, detrimentally affected what was a thriving scene. Though Peter still felt part of a punk community after the scenes' weakening, he wanted to strengthen that community for himself and others through the active production of punk spaces and activities in his locality.

I have a personal example of similar loss of space and the relevance of place. The only independent record shop in our town closed, as a result of a large corporate chain opening a music shop nearby. The independent shop had also

been used as a venue for events, but it meant the loss of more than a permanent space than punk shows; it had been used for the coalescence, sharing and production of DIY punk ideas and community. In a small town with few opportunities for the collective meeting of punks, it had been a space where the production of punk ideas, identities and communities happened. The sharing of small and independent music, DIY bands' music supported the promotion of the idea that it is possible to 'do it yourself', so the closure of the shop had a detrimental effect on the local punk scene. Punks then had to work that little bit harder to nurture a local scene. This illustrates how place, and opportunities and infrastructure within place, have an impact on opportunities for physical community spaces, and how a lack of physical punk space can affect community opportunities.

The data illustrated the role of network building as significant in understanding community in a DIY punk context, which is crucial to explaining how DIY punk cultural production is sustained and grows. This research found that the DIY punk scenes investigated were maintained through networks of punks expressing DIY ethics and through certain place-based opportunities. Certain social and physical infrastructure was needed, to enable local scenes to exist, grow and thrive, such as available practice spaces and venues for shows, places to record, record stores, and local contacts (echoing O'Connor (2002) and Moran's (2010) findings). Participants mentioned developing rapport with a venue to enable them to hold events there, having contacts who could vouch for them, to be able to use community spaces, or developing friendship with people who will support what an individual or group is trying to achieve. DIY punk community is produced through inter-personal connections and networks that encourage continued action and support. Such connections shape the manifestation of DIY punk scenes.

DIY punk community formation and sustenance is related to place, but DIY punk scenes also influence participants' relationships with place. Daphne expressed

the importance of place and finding, or creating, spaces for belonging, when describing her relationship with her local scene. She explained that she had been brought up to pursue certain lifestyles and careers that did not necessarily fit with what she wanted. She was expected, by parents, friends and teachers, to go on to have a successful and 'high flying' career, such as becoming a lawyer, and to have that as her life focus. She explained that having moved around a lot from an early age, her involvement in a local DIY punk scene, as well as involvement in a local feminist group, helped her to feel 'at home' in a new city and to feel part of a community where her alternative life goals were supported,

*Daphne:... being in [current city of residence] I could either pursue an academic career, which would mean applying anywhere in the world, or I could realise that there are things, mostly in terms of social structure that you become part of, that you know should keep you in a certain place. So it was becoming more comfortable with not wanting a career at the expense of belonging and having roots somewhere and being established enough to actively change the situations you're in.*

Daphne elaborated that her experience with her local DIY scene, and through that her commitment to DIY as an ethic, has helped her to be able to choose belonging as a reason to live in a place, rather than based on career opportunities or living up to family expectations. Becoming active in DIY punk, through being in a band and attending shows, gave Daphne a sense of belonging in a new city (she has now lived there for several years) and offered opportunities for alternative ways of being to those she had experienced before.

Thus, place is significant to understanding community in a DIY punk context. DIY punk production can give a sense of belonging connected to place, as well as encourage involvement in, and development of, local scenes, to continue to create, produce and change local culture through DIY punk participation. What makes participant accounts about 'community' particularly interesting are the layers of community that are illustrated. The data suggests that community is multi-layered, as imagined and interconnected with place, with different scales of community interaction, and complex relationships between individuals and community.

### 5.2.3 DIY punk community as multi-layered and multi-scalar

Participants tended to struggle to identify the boundaries of their communities or scenes. This research shows that multi-layered and multi-scalar understanding of scenes and community is necessary to understand community in a DIY punk context, as punk communities exist at multiple interwoven but also distinct scales. While using terms such as scene and community regularly and without hesitation, trying to pin point specifics about their community, scene or sense of belonging seemed to be difficult for participants.

Participants construct boundaries around their communities in complex and fluid ways and participant accounts implied community as multi-layered. Participants can feel belonging to multiple communities at once. Peter feels part of a straight edge community, as straight edge is a strong part of his identity and involvement in DIY punk. He also described a sense of belonging to a DIY punk community, which overlaps with his straight edge community. Peter also illustrates a multi-layered sense of his own community when he frames individual shows as communities, as well as describing a global community,

*Peter: The shows are communities. I mean, you turn up and if you've been to a few gigs before you'll recognise people there and you'll make friends or whatever... You'll talk to them there. Maybe you'll hang out with them outside the music scene and do other things with them.*

When I asked if Peter saw his community as existing in his home town he clarified.

*Peter: It's a worldwide thing really. If I just went to [home-town] shows then I'd say I'm part of the [home-town] shows or whatever. But I travel abroad to shows and stuff... so it's active everywhere.*

Regular shows with regular show-goers nurture a sense of local punk community, as well as a broader community. Relationships develop that are linked to shows, bands, people and ideologies that extend far beyond show spaces. To illustrate his multi-layered expression of his community, when describing his experiences of going to a festival in the Czech Republic, Peter used 'scene' to describe both those at the festival who would have come from a variety of countries and cities, as well as the local scene where he lives.



Similarly, Daphne explains that her local scene is connected to other local scenes through 'mutual beliefs' (or collective consciousness),

*Daphne: People say 'support the local scene' so that's people around you geographically, but that's also being part of a community that's joined through mutual beliefs.*

Some bands visit her town and they describe local scenes that sound similar in politics, interests and goals to hers. DIY community exists in distinct physical spaces and places, but also exists less physically, bounded by politics and ideology. Denise defined DIY punk as a community and described feeling part of a DIY punk community in her home-town. She explained that when she first moved away to university she felt that she had potentially left her DIY punk scene and community behind, but over time she realised that she still feels connected to her community, when she is away, as well as feeling connected through taking part in the local DIY punk scene in her university's city,

*Denise: When I first started going to university I was kind of aware that a lot of things were happening in [home-town] and I was worried that I wasn't going to be involved in them and, you know, I'd miss out, ... you can kind of feel a little isolated. But, I don't feel removed from the community now at all because I took the chance to take a look – to step out and kind of look at it from afar. ...When I'm in [university city] I don't 'deactivate' from being involved in the DIY scene. I've gone out and I've actively scouted out the DIY people in [university region] and [University City] to be involved there and if I hadn't then I still keep in contact with people from [home-town] regularly so I don't feel removed.*

Denise retains a sense of belonging to her community through regular contact with people in her home town and by remaining an active participant in her home town's punk scene, even while away,

*Denise: I'll still help organise and still tell people that I know are in [home town] that these shows are on, you know? 'Please go' and that kind of thing. I still try and promote what's going on.*

Her continued contact was facilitated by online interactions. So, Denise feels connected to her community in her home town, yet when asked if she sees her community as just existing in her home town she was not sure. Denise implied a multi-layered imagined community with a sensitivity to place, in her description,

*Denise: I feel like the community, the spirit of it is really everywhere you*

*go that there's a DIY culture. But for all intents and purposes, I feel like my community of it is in [home town] ... when everyone's there and you're at a show or something like that, where everyone is and having a good time.*

In contrast, Samantha did not feel that her community extended beyond punks who were not also vegan, regardless of locality.

As shown, participants' sense of community belonging is also dependant on expectations of political and ideological commonality as well as place. Participants' sense of community and belonging vary, depending on space and scene. Jake explained that he would like to say he is part of a queer punk scene<sup>41</sup>, but that there is not a coherently or consistently queer scene visible in his locality. There are local punk scenes that have more prominent queer punk identities, but part of how he identifies with punk is through his identity as queer and he feels connected to a queer punk community. Bessa similarly described feeling part of a queer punk scene, due to their identities and political beliefs, yet they do not feel their local scene is, necessarily, wholly 'queer punk'. So, their sense of belonging within a queer punk scene was not specifically place-based. Participants' sense of community belonging can then be mutually connected to localised scenes as well as more imagined scenes, which are more abstract and transcend physical boundaries. Denise found it hard to articulate where she felt the boundaries of her community were. She felt a sense of connectedness through identity, ideologies and actions to a broad community of DIY punk, while also recognising the significance of the specificity of the local scenes that she takes part in and where she feels is home. Such an understanding is necessary to avoid inaccurate notions of cultural-hybridity or implications of global homogeneity, and the over-simplification of music scenes and communities (see 2.3.3).

A sense of DIY punk community as multi-layered can be nurtured through participant attendance at shows within and outside of their local scenes. There

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<sup>41</sup> The queer punk scene Jake refers to is less music genre specific, connecting participants through queer identities and queer politics across punk music genres.

were individual and collective emotional responses to show attendance, which nurture community. Cohen (1997) explains that participants' spirits can be lifted when attending a show that has a nice, relaxing or fun atmosphere. Participants used phrases such as *'makes you feel good'*, *'you come out buzzing'*, *'when we're all together singing. It feels good'* and *'there's no feeling like it'*, when describing a good show. These quotes illustrate that shows are collective emotional experiences, with participants expressing the power of collectively experiencing music performances, compounded by the emotions that can be invoked by creative sonic expressions. My findings resonate with Brown and Pickerill's (2009, p.5) work that illustrated how spaces can work with emotions to encourage collectivity and action, *'Space is emotionally saturated and spatial elements transmit the affects, feelings and emotions that can fuel political activism.'* Show attendance can then reinforce feelings of collectivity and belonging, through individual and collective emotional experiences (see also the collective physical interactions in the vignette in the previous chapter (4.1), particularly participants putting their arms round each other and signing). Participants also reflected on a sense of community felt when listening to some music outside of shows, further illustrating community as multi-scalar.

Peter expressed similar positive emotional responses to attending shows outside his local scene. He expressed excitement about the opportunity to meet others 'like him' and the strong sense of an active punk community, from attending an annual DIY punk festival in the Czech Republic called Fluff Fest. He talked, excitedly, about the experience of meeting other like-minded people, particularly noting the large number of vegans and people who adhere to a straight edge lifestyle he has met through going to the festival.

Peter: *I've been there for 3 years now. And the punk scene here is up and down so when you go there it really reinforces it and you're like 'oh yeah, this is it and it's still going' and it reinforces us<sup>42</sup> each year. Like, I keep thinking 'oh yeah it's still worth being involved'*

Me: *what's the word? It's like going to a spa and being rejuvenated?*

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<sup>42</sup> Peter uses the word 'us' to refer to himself as 'us' can be used interchangeably with 'me' in North East dialects when said in a particular way.

Peter: *\*laughs\* yeah*

For Peter, the sense of excitement he feels at the festival acts as a reminder for the reasons he is involved in DIY punk and why he works so hard to create, support and sustain the DIY punk scene in the town where he lives. Feeling part of a community and having fun within this community is important to Peter. He implies, therefore, that his yearly retreat bolsters his continued commitment to DIY cultural production in his home town. Community spaces and places can thus be separate but interconnected.

Finally, the multi-layered and multi-scalar nature of DIY punk community is perceivable through participants' emotional investments in DIY punk cultural participation, which connect the individual and community. A theme present in several of my interviews was that of mental well-being and a sense of catharsis gained from involvement in DIY. During observations, many of the performers I watched talked about drawing from personal and emotional experience for song inspiration. Songs about love and relationship break-ups were very common, but some performers also sang about bereavement, mental health and well-being, using the platform of the stage to address some difficult emotional topics that are generally seldom talked about publicly. Evelyn used song writing to address topics that she described as common and important, yet socially taboo. She writes and sings about mental health, gender, and body positivity, drawing on her own, often very personal, experiences. She does so in order to raise awareness as well as using lyric writing as a way to feel 'OK'. Despite the vulnerability that Evelyn feels when singing about such personal subjects in public, she has become increasingly personal with her song writing over time and in raising awareness about socially taboo topics. She uses song writing and performance to help her feel better, and to hopefully help others feel better too. Evelyn explain that being part of a community where she feels safe enough to, or encouraged to, express such ideas and emotions is important to her. Similarly, Bessa described the process of song writing as a therapeutic way to articulate their thoughts and feelings and to raise awareness through singing about them,

Bessa: *I guess I generally play music, on some level because I feel like it*

*keeps me sane and I find it very therapeutic, because it's the only way I feel like I can fully get out anything that I'm thinking.*

To use a more light-hearted example, while talking to a performer at a show after her set and complimenting her on her lyrics, I got into a discussion with her about the song writing process and where we draw motivation from. Struggling to articulate her motives for song writing, she turned to an everyday corporeal analogy, describing the process of writing songs as being like *'really needing a poo... you have something in you that needs to get out and you can't feel comfortable until it's out'*. She described an affective and more immediate response of relief that is possible through song writing. Song writing and performance are enabled and occur within and through DIY punk community and community spaces. As a result of these discussions, it appears that emotion can reinforce (or discourage, see Chapter 6) DIY punk action and involvement and that emotions connect individuals to community, which is multi-layered and multi-scaled.

Participants illustrated complex notions of community to describe the interconnectedness of their experiences of belonging and place that they associate with scenes on a local level, to the broader ideological, social, musical and interpersonal connections that are felt on regional, national and international scales. Thus, a multi-layered understanding of DIY punk community is necessary, which acknowledges punk community as imagined but that highlights the significance of place. The scenes and communities discussed by participants are not unbounded; rather the boundaries are not fixed, they are fluid and interpreted, relying on distinct physical, social and cultural localities, spaces and places, as well as social and cultural connections and broader shared ideas, knowledge and ideologies. It, therefore, seems that DIY punk can produce multi-layered imagined communities, as DIY punk culture, participation and identities transcend local, regional and national boundaries and cannot be tied or fixed to particular geographical locations. These communities must be understood in terms of place and local specificities, while recognising a multitude of overlapping,

interconnected and multi-layered experiences and understandings of DIY punk communities. The complex view of community as multi-layered and multi-scalar put forward by participants, which accounts for local specificity as well as global social, cultural and political connectedness, supports aspects of post-subcultural critiques of homogeneity in subcultural identities in the literature (see 2.3), connecting local scene specificities with a sense of global connectedness. As Massey (1998) argues youth cultures<sup>43</sup> are 'products of interaction'. Such interactions are direct and indirect, virtual, and physical and are neither wholly locally specific nor globally homogeneous.

### **5.3 The role of friendship, relationships and a sense of belonging**

The research found that friendship, belonging and social networks are all fundamental to understanding DIY punk community. Within discussions of community, friendship emerged as influential on experiences of DIY punk, encouraging continued involvement. The opportunity to meet and keep in contact with like-minded people, to support and gain support from friends and to gain advice and expertise, to collaborate and have fun, are all important in the functioning of DIY punk scenes.

Relationships and friendships enable the sharing of information, help, advice and expertise. Chris refers to DIY punk as an 'underground network' highlighting the power and opportunities that lie within it. When participants attempt to book a tour for their own bands, for example, it helps (or is necessary) to know promoters in cities that they can contact, for promoters to know them and/or their band, or to know people who can say whether a promoter is reliable and good to work with, and if a venue is fun to play in. Knowing people who live in other cities, or bands who have toured where they plan to tour, can help to identify which cities are fun to play in and visit, if there may be other bands touring at the same time who their tour may clash with, or who they may be able to play with. Sharing knowledge

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<sup>43</sup> See discussion in 2.3.2 on the critique of the use of term 'youth cultures'

about which bands are touring and when is also important. Therefore, the networks developed between scenes are vital to the continuation of punk bands and scenes.

*Peter: I keep trying to quit putting on shows but then a band I really like will ask me to put them on so I do.*

Participants rely on the help and support of those who are passionate and involved in their scene. Participants also support those who have helped them in the past. Trust, reciprocity and friendship are all vital here.

Introducing and sharing contacts, and the creation and maintenance of friendships are fundamental to understanding how DIY punk culture is produced. To build up DIY punk knowledge and networks takes time and hard work, and friendship was the term used for a lot of the 'contacts' that participants described. Trust and reciprocity are key to DIY punk community. Participants described feeling comfortable sharing their homes with others who they do not know, because they felt safe within punk networks (though this sense of security with 'community' members is not constant, see 6.3). Relationships, motivations and desires are emotional. Participants have emotional investments in the DIY ethic, in music and in each other, which drive DIY punk cultural production. In this way, practical infrastructure provide opportunities for DIY punk collective activity, but inter-personal knowledge and relationships based on trust, mutual ethics and desires, and sense of community were most valued by participants.

The roles of friendship and support are considerable in understanding why DIY punk appeals to people and why they want to continue to work hard to create and maintain DIY culture. Jake explained that he meets lots of people through his involvement in DIY and through travelling to play at shows and to see bands. Through community networks participants make strong bonds. Jake described his sense of collectivity and community in relation to friendship,

*Jake: I don't know if it's a community or a group of friends, but maybe that's the same thing. I definitely have a group of friends but it can be seen as a community in a way, because you're always meeting people through that group of friends. And the fact that I could go to different parts of the country*

*and I'd know people through these friends. And I could go to another country... and know people through that kind of art and that kind of music.*

Friendship acted as a motivation for participants touring and travelling, seeking opportunities to make new friends and visit old ones. A person from North East England may visit a city or different country because they had made friends with a band while they were touring in the UK. Bessa moved to a new city as a result of meeting people through DIY punk. They travelled to attend a show in a town quite far from where they live, to see a touring band from the USA. There they met some people from the North East who they felt a really strong connection with. They decided to move up to the North East to be closer to the people they had met and to be part of a scene that they felt a connection with and, more importantly, felt comfortable with: *'moving from a city with very few punks to a city where being punk is normal'*. They explained that it was significant for them to have found a scene where they can feel comfortable and safe talking about gender and sexuality (describing abstract theoretical discussions as well as sharing experiences of feeling marginalised as a result of their gender and sexual identity).

Samantha explained that her strong network of friends supports her DIY punk involvement, as they attend shows that she puts on even if they do not know the band, because they share and want to support the aspiration to create spaces that are for 'them',

*Samantha: We were quite lucky in that we had a good network of friends, which is another massive, massive bonus of meeting like-minded people and having a really strong sense of subculture, and being proud of it. So these people turned up to our shows not because they super liked the band but because they were grateful for something to do in a city where there's so much to do but not for people, I'll put in inverted commas, 'like us', who just want to eat vegan food and stroke animals and high five all the time.*

Here Samantha illustrates the importance of friendship and belonging as people want to support their friends' projects and encourage the creation of spaces in which they feel comfortable, rather than because of love of the music. Participants described making friends as a result of shared views, ideologies and passions



and those friendships help to support and maintain scenes by encouraging continued organising and involvement.

As well as practical help, emotional support was also consistent in participant accounts. Samantha described the emotional support she finds in her DIY vegan-punk community,

*Samantha: We meet up, they come over for dinner and everyone brings a dish, and that's DIY in itself and we all go out for coffee and everyone always makes sure that everyone else is ok.*

Daphne also discussed 'helping others out' as a significant aspect of community. She uses examples of providing financial and emotional support to explain how caring for others supports and strengthens community,

*Daphne: There's community as a goal, which is people knowing about other people and caring about them and if someone needs help, helping them. ... Helping with financial things. Helping someone come out to their parents, offering support. I've heard of other people helping support people when they're having problems at home, making sure they have somewhere to stay. So they can pop round any time.*

Samantha also credits her group of friends, as a support network, for helping her to achieve what she described as the '*personal goal of being vegan*', which she feels is a significant part of who she is, her ideology and her identity. She has a support network and sense of belonging found through her involvement in DIY punk,

*Samantha: So we've been pretty lucky, and I know I have especially because [partner] when he went vegan and lived in [home-town] he had a really strong sense of community and he had a lot of people, whereas when I first went vegan it lasted a week because I was by myself, living with my family who are strongly anti-vegan and in some senses pretty conservative and it's much harder to do it by yourself, well, to do anything by yourself really. Unless you're incredibly motivated, which... most people aren't \*laughs\*.*

Daphne described starting a band as the result of developing relationships with others in bands. Learning that there was no need to be an expert to be in a band made starting a band seem achievable to Daphne. She explained that until she found her local DIY punk scene, she would not have considered being in a band

as a possibility for her. She also explained that before living in her current city, she did not know people who she would have wanted to start a band with, as she knew no-one who shared her principles regarding music creation and production,

*Daphne: Before I was introduced to the punk scene I never really thought I could be in a band. It never really crossed my mind. It was something that other people did and you didn't really know what started them off. Seeing other people in bands made it seem like I could probably do it if I tried. All I had to do is want to do it, obviously with loads of help from the points of instruments, expertise in how to put on an amp, knowing what an amp was, you know, nobody does things on their own and I think before I joined the punk scene there was no way that I could have done it with nice people. I knew a lot of people who have guitars and things who I would never have wanted to be in a band with or learn what those things were.*

Daphne was not simply motivated by wanting to be in a band, as she had never thought about being in a band before discovering DIY punk culture, partly because she had not met people she would want to collaborate with creatively. She was motivated by the idea that it would be fun, that it was possible, that it was rebellious, and that people she knew and liked were also involved. The sharing of expertise and instruments made it possible. Daphne's explanation combines intrinsic motivation to join a band, which seemed like a possibility after seeing others 'like her' doing the same. She relied on a network of support, including friends and band mates who helped her to learn her instrument, to show her how to set up a guitar amp (amplifier) and tell her what an amp was, to share their expertise and to help her to build confidence. A sense of community through friendship and support enabled and encouraged Daphne to become a member of a band and become more actively involved in DIY punk cultural production.

Samantha described a closeness and belonging through friendships that she has made as a result of her involvement in DIY punk, comparing them to past relationships,

*Samantha: we talk a lot about what we have in common, and I honestly don't feel I have much in common with people who aren't vegan or punk \*both laugh\*. No one wants to spend time with people they don't have stuff in common with, but I feel that I get so much more out of the friendships that I have with these people than people that I don't associate with, their friendships with each other seem really superficial to me, because I've been there, I grew up with that, and now I've developed into someone who*

*has full autonomy over their social life, that's not dictated by Facebook<sup>44</sup> or school and I can do whatever I want and there's so much more freedom within punk.*

Samantha's sense of belonging in her DIY punk community is connected to trust. The friendships she has made, through DIY punk, led her to assume that she can feel safe and at ease with people she meets through certain friends and networks,

*Samantha: there's a certain group of people that, if I met a friend of theirs I would automatically be at ease, which is not the normal way that it happens in my day to day life where I interact with people who I don't have shared views with.*

Again, illustrating the significance of friendship and trust in participation and sense of community.

Personal and collective well-being can also be encouraged through learning instruments, learning favourite songs, and playing music with friends. Pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction nurture a sense of well-being in participants.

*Jake: And I really like, in a basic sense, I really like learning new things on guitar. Yeah it makes me feel good if I can see what a band plays and go home and learn it from that. Like simple pleasures. And it kinda fits together like that.*

Daphne explained the enjoyment she feels as a result of learning new instruments and having fun with others doing the same thing; *'It's fun. It's a really creative thing, making music, so it's a fun way to contribute.'* She enjoys the interpersonal connections she has gained through learning from and teaching others in her band and developing songs together. She also feels satisfaction when she learns a new guitar part or when her band finishes a song after a lot of hard work. She describes personal and collective satisfaction from hard work, and she described pride in her own and her friends' achievements.

Friendship and belonging, and people working to support each other through emotional and cultural bonds, much like other communities, are fundamental to DIY punk community. Participants illustrated their aims to actively create, support

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<sup>44</sup> Facebook social networking website

and strengthen DIY punk community. Participants also illustrated the ways that networks of friendship and feelings of belonging strengthened their own sense of community. The data then suggests that DIY punk produces communities and those DIY punk communities enable DIY cultural production, by providing the means to produce DIY punk culture and encouraging participation in DIY punk, through friendship, support and belonging. The notion of belonging is key to participants' active construction of alternative identities, discussed next.

#### **5.4 So, what should I call you? Constructing and claiming collective identity**

This research found that participants narratively constructed punk community through the creation and use of certain labels. Participants used various labels to describe themselves and others, constructing divisions between 'them' and 'everyone else', strengthening their own sense of DIY punk identity. The labels used depended on context and were often light hearted, but served to nurture a sense of belonging and collective identity within DIY punk community and are useful examples of participants engaging in DIY punk cultural production.

As discussed in 2.3, there is a debate in the literature about terminology, in relation to subcultures in general and DIY and punk subcultures specifically. Academics contesting the use of collective terms for subcultural activity illustrate the difficulty and implausibility of adequately labelling such complex, fluid and intricate social and cultural interactions, identities and activities. Yet many debates have focused on what labels are most appropriate when describing these social phenomena, such as 'youth culture', 'sub culture', and 'post subculture'. As the literature reviewed revealed (2.3), scholars of subculture have been criticised for dedicating too much attention to terminological debates that are not really of concern to those who participate in the cultures in question. Furness (2012, p.23) observes,

*I have seen no clear evidence that subcultural researchers have ever asked – or even thought to ask – what their research “subjects” actually do call themselves, or what they would like to be called, or **why it matters***

[emphasis added].

This research remedies this failing by exploring the terminological debates around what the research participants call themselves and how they distinguish themselves from others, and what this tells us. It explores how participants construct DIY punk culture, in part, through the marking of identity boundaries with labels, and how belonging and collective identity nurture punk community.

Participants make sense of themselves and others by narratively constructing identities through labels. It is important to note, though, that they often have a sense of humour about the labels they use and recognise their limitations. When explaining how he identified himself and the scene he was part of, Jake illustrated his own frustration with terminology, as labels are unable to articulate the complexity, interconnectedness and fluidity of DIY punk identity, supporting post-structuralist conceptualisations of identity (Butler, 1990; 1993; Elliott, 2014; Manning, 2009; Stephens-Griffin, 2015, see also 2.1.2 and 2.3),

*Jake: I'd like to say I'm part of a queer scene. But I don't think that's really true either. I think DIY is the best way to describe it... don't know really, it could be any word really. I think it just gets bogged down with actual names for things.*

Jake's statement illustrates that within punk cultural spheres there are terminological concerns, disputes and conflict also highlighted by Furness (2012). Describing where the boundaries lie within and beyond 'scenes', and where individuals place themselves and others within them, can be difficult and inevitably varied. Yet, what Jake highlights is the importance of his actions and how he feels about them, rather than what label he would put on his involvement and his relationship with 'it'.

Interview participants referred to themselves by many and multiple, different labels during the course of our discussions. Some participants were more confident in claiming the label of 'punk' (as well as other labels such as 'activist', 'vegan', 'feminist', 'queer', 'straight edge' and 'anarchist'). Yet, for others their relationship with such labels was less comfortable or straightforward. For Cheryl,

when asked if she considers punk as part of her identity she answered simply 'Yes.' Again, when asked if she would refer to herself as a punk she replied 'Yes', without hesitation or further explanation. In contrast, Denise seemed less comfortable about accepting the label.

*Denise: I'm part of the punk process, kind of thing ... I am a part of the punk community.*

I asked her to clarify if she considered herself to be 'a punk' and she responded.

*Denise: I would consider myself as a punk, but I know that if people were to look at me they would have no idea. I think that \*long pause\* you don't have to call yourself a punk to be a punk... but it's kind of like, I dunno, it's really difficult.*

Hesitance may have related to anxieties regarding authenticity, which is discussed further in Chapter 6. For many, 'punk' is a meaningful label but knowing that it is so complex and diverse in meaning, to people within and beyond punk communities, can make its use problematic.

For some participants 'insiderness' is key to their use of certain labels, explaining that they would call themselves a punk to other punks, but would avoid the term when talking to family members or work colleagues, who may be less familiar with punk subcultural signifiers and intricacies, to avoid incorrect assumptions about their identity and participation. Jake struggled to articulate how he identified himself and his relationship with DIY. It was clear from our discussion that his adherence to a DIY ethic was very important to him and that DIY punk music and culture was part of his everyday life and identity. Still, when I asked if he identifies as a 'punk' he replied,

*Jake: Not really to be honest, I feel a bit silly. Like, it feels a bit weird and outdated ... it just feels a bit childish. But being a child is fun I guess.*

He elaborated that he feels part of a punk community and that punk means a lot to him, but that he feels not everyone understands the specificities of the punk he is interested in or his punk community. Jake makes references to discourses around punk that position punk participation and identity as a 'phase', something for young people, that is not serious. Claiming a 'punk' identity is too loaded to be used comfortably by participants in some contexts, while it remains a useful,

meaningful and powerful label for them personally. Expectations that there is a lack of understanding of what DIY punk means to them further strengthens a sense of community, through imagined boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

The use identifying labels is often dependant on context, supporting the earlier discussion (2.3.1). Identities are unstable, fluid and mutual (Elliott, 2014) and that individuals can '*cross-cut a variety of different groups*' (Hodkinson, 2005, p.133). Some participants accentuated the significance of context to their identities by adopting 'punk names' to differentiate identities. A 'punk name' is a name that someone is known by within the context of punk. Some famous examples include Siouxsie Sioux of Siouxsie and the Banshees, Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, Penny Rimbaud, Joy de Vivre, Eve Libertine and Steve Ignorant of Crass. For some, the name could be based on a band name (a famous example would be Joey Ramone from the Ramones). Participants with 'punk names' explained that these names were self-chosen or given nicknames and were what they are known as within their punk community or throughout punk networks, and/or their online presence<sup>45</sup>. Describing a nickname as a 'punk name' illustrates a commitment to punk and a positioning of the self within a punk context, as well as implying fluidity of identity (Elliott, 2014). The fluidity of (punk) identity can be illustrated through Jake's adoption of a punk name online so that he can interact with other punks while '*people from school can't find*' him. The suggestion that identifying as punk is contextual and fluid further justifies a complex understanding of punk community, which is also fluid and dynamic.

The sense of humour that punks have about creating and claiming DIY punk labels was apparent in the research. The findings echo Furness's (2012) assertion that '*Punks are creative and quirky; perhaps they would prefer to be known, in peer-reviewed journals, as a "pack," or a "gaggle," or even a "murder."*' My friends and I like to refer to ourselves as a 'murder of vegans', for example.

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<sup>45</sup> Some participants also use pseudonyms to separate their 'real' identity from their involvement in activism and direct action.

In the interviews and observations, it was common for participants to refer to certain people as 'normies' or 'normal people'. That is, non-punks or those they associate with 'mainstream' or dominant attitudes, behaviours or culture. People deemed not involved in alternative lifestyles, activism, DIY or punk may be referred to by such collective identifiers. The term 'normies' comes from the notion that 'normal' people are different to 'punks' (or 'queers' and other identities that participants expressed). The term 'muggle' was also used by some, interchangeably with 'normie', which is an allusion to the term 'muggle' in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series to describe people who are not magic, (that is, 'normal' people). Although these terms could be perceived as somewhat derogatory, they were generally used in a jovial way and usually not taken too seriously, though on occasion may be used as insults. The shared interactions that distinguish 'punks' from 'muggles' strengthens a sense of collective identity and belonging, which is important to the development of DIY punk community.

The defining of self in terms of others is important in the process of participants constructing boundaries around their community and identities. To take an analogical example, I was at a show and a friend, Louise, talked to me after she had performed in her band and described a frustrating conversation they had had. Someone had talked to them after their set, giving them advice on how to 'get big'. Louise was frustrated, struggling to articulate their commitment to DIY and feeling criticised for not wanting to have a contract with a major label. My friend Sarah replied in a light-hearted but supportive tone, '*what does he know, he's a fucking muggle.*' The use of 'muggle' here expresses a mutual recognition of the difference between the attitudes of themselves and the person who made the comment. That is, he does not understand that DIY punks may not desire to 'get big'. Sarah implied that, as an 'outsider', he did not understand the cultural and political context in which their musical endeavours take place. Identifying the person who critiqued their friend as a 'muggle' offered reassurance that the desires and goals in DIY punk are valid, even though they might not be understood or accepted by person unfamiliar with DIY punk culture.



The fluidity and complexity of identity (Butler, 1990; 1993; Manning, 2009; Stephens-Griffin, 2015) brings to bear the importance of the narrative construction of personal and group identity through labelling. As noted by Rose (1997, p.2) *'community' provides a structure for senses of identity which desire to be stable and harmonious, uniform within and hostile to what is positioned as without*. As well as distinguishing between punk and 'non-punk' or 'the mainstream', participants use labels to make distinctions within what may be considered punk. Bessa described a useful distinction to illustrate the diversity of the label 'punk',

Bessa: ....*my friend uses a distinction that I like. He says 'punk' is the type of punk that looks alternative but is still really mainstream, but 'punx' describes punks like us, who are more about community and are DIY.*

In a broader sense, Bessa refers to a distinction that is often made between punk that is DIY (performed in accordance with a DIY ethic) and punk that is corporate (or mainstream) or a-political. More specifically, Bessa used 'punx' to refer to punk cultural production that they identify most with, one that is not just DIY but is connected to many other political and social ideals, such as inclusivity and anti-discrimination, queer politics, body-positivity and sex-positivity (see 4.3.2 on individual and collective interconnected DIY ethics). The distinction that Bessa identified was made partly in jest, showing an awareness of the difficulties in defining subcultures identified in post-subcultural studies (see 2.3.1). Bessa uses 'punk' and 'punx' to highlight differences between the punk that they participate in and other manifestations of punk culture, as well as differences between 'punx' culture and dominant culture. So 'punx' for Bessa describes the community that they work to create, giving a sense of boundedness to a fluid concept that is complex and difficult to describe, but is nevertheless felt and experienced by participants, such as Bessa.

Participants may combine the label 'punk' with other labels to signify their specific relationship with punk and to better represent their identity. Samantha described herself as a 'vegan-punk', (using the term as hyphenated). Her veganism is fundamental to her punk identity and her sense of belonging within her punk

scene. Samantha also made reference to friends who describe themselves as 'awkward punks'. Used with a sense of humour, she implied that labelling themselves 'awkward punks' made them feel more comfortable about their social anxiety at punk shows, as they were not alone in feeling awkward while also feeling a sense of belonging. Evelyn described a joke they have with their friends about creating a secret punk handshake, to be able to tell who are 'rad punks' and who are not. The shared joke implies a desire to narratively construct identity using labels for a more coherent sense of collective identity rooted in specific politics, because of the limitations of the label of punk due to subjectivity and diversity.

Chris referred to himself as a punk and others as punks several times during the interview and expressed frustration when others who he considers punks reject the label,

Chris: *I always get frustrated when punks tell me that they're not punk. You know, like 'I'm not punk, I don't accept any label.' Okay, Okay, whatever. They're like 'Do you?' and I'm like 'yeah I'm a punk'. They're like: 'but that means you're just like those other guys, the spikey jacket people.' And I'm like 'sure, I don't care.' I'd rather be them than whatever category I would fall into otherwise.*

This excerpt illustrates the limitations of the label 'punk' as a label rich but diverse in meaning. Chris is aware of its limitations, but nevertheless he sees value in collectively claiming the label. Chris' reference to '*spikey jacket people*' is similar to what Beth described as a 'clichéd' view of punk based on 1970s aesthetics. She explained that she gets frustrated when people make assumptions about her punk shows '*they assume punks are all like The Sex Pistols. Everyone wearing tartan trousers and Mohawks. I'm reluctant to associate with that type of punk*'. She explains that the Sex Pistols were not DIY and the sort of punk she is interested in is not about nihilism, '*there was DIY and political punk back then and there still is*' (see 2.3 on punk subcultural resistance as more significant than style). Earlier in the interview, Chris does make distinctions between 'punk' and 'DIY punk', explaining DIY as a movement more politically motivated than other forms of punk, which may include '*the spikey jacket people*'. Referring to others who share similar politics and interests as 'punk' (even when they may not identify

as punks themselves) reflects a desire to strengthen and celebrate collective identity and punk community, as alternative to mainstream culture and other cultures and communities.

The formation of communities, around DIY ethics and participants striving for community cohesion, is connected to a desire to create alternatives to 'mainstream' society, through cultural production. The creation and claiming of, generally subculturally specific, labels exemplifies the narrative construction of personal and group identities. These labels develop understanding of the self and sense of belonging despite a lack consistency between participants on the exact meaning or boundaries of such terms. Labels enable the articulation of who participants are, by illustrating who they are not. The labels were used to celebrate difference and the existence of alternative lifestyles, ethics, and activities to those that may be supported by mainstream, patriarchal, capitalist societal culture and structures. The use of labels in collective identity construction helps to clarify and explain, as well as constitute, identities. The examples provided respond to Jenkins' (2002) critique of a tendency in social research to overstate the '*boundedness of collectivities*', as they illustrate the complexity and contingencies in the participatory processes that reinforce DIY punk collectivities.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

Considering the prevalence of notions of community in participants' accounts, it was necessary to look at the role that community plays in sustaining DIY punk. Community (encompassing belonging, place, relationships, networks, and identities) works to strengthen DIY punk as a diffuse movement. Community, as a contested concept, is useful in the context of DIY punk, when a definition is established that expresses community as imagined but with a sensitivity to place. DIY punk communities have complex geographies of space, place, global connections, and local specificities, which are interwoven in multi-layered and multi-scalar ways. This chapter has explored these complexities through exploring interconnections between individuals and community, how community

is strengthened by participation and how community in turn strengthens participation.

DIY punk imagined communities are strengthened by friendship, networks of support, place-based opportunities, belonging and the narrative construction of identities. DIY punk community is complex and cross-cuts different places and spacialities. Local scene specificities, genre specificities, political specificities and disparities, and identity differences, all contribute to this complexity. The difficulty that punks have in defining themselves highlights their awareness of the complexity of DIY punk culture, community and identity boundaries. This data illustrates the diversity, complexity and idiosyncrasies of punk and suggests that the claiming of labels (including personal labels such as punk, feminist, anarchist, vegan, straight edge, as well as labels used to distinguish 'non-punks' from themselves such as 'normie' and 'muggle') helps to constitute and strengthen DIY punk identities and communities.

This chapter has teased out concepts with regards to participant belonging, support, well-being, motivation, friendship and inter-personal connections related to community. The empirical findings support the assertion that to understand politics and activism, we need to engage with the personal and the interpersonal. DIY punk participation is rewarding and emotional work. Participants reflect on feelings of belonging, relief, catharsis, satisfaction and enjoyment. Such feelings and emotion are fundamental to DIY participation and connect individuals to communities. This chapter leads into a discussion in Chapter 6 about the often emotionally fraught relationships that participants have with DIY punk and DIY punk principles, through examples of attempts to negotiate conflicts, contradictions and dilemmas.

## 6.0 Negotiating everyday problematics in DIY punk cultural production

The previous two analysis chapters have shown that DIY punk cultural production is complex and multifaceted, contextual and situational, shared as well as individual, incorporating complex interconnections in and between ethics, communities, identities, and praxis. Putting DIY ethics into practice can be hard and emotional work, and concerns and contradictions arise regularly without clear-cut solutions or responses. Great frustration lies with the self and others around ethical dilemmas that are faced, when responding to what is achievable versus what is desired in a DIY punk context. I emphasise the *everyday problematics* because many of the issues discussed are mundane, yet the small-scale and everyday negotiations of ethics and praxis are examples of the building blocks that Chatterton and Pickerill, (2010) identified in the production of alternative, prefigurative cultures and communities. I use 'problematics' in the title to frame this discussion, rather than problems, because the examples discussed are better considered as uncertainties or contextual and situated concerns. The focus here is on the negotiation of some of the problematics of involvement in, and commitment to, DIY punk, rather than trying to identify constant or inherent problems within DIY punk.

This chapter sheds light on the complex, contradictory practices and limitations that are experienced in attempts to disrupt, or provide alternatives to, mainstream culture. This chapter's vignette uses an example of a zine author being publically 'called-out' online to illustrate the emotional and political complexities of putting DIY ethics into practice. This research supports Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) argument that autonomous, anti-capitalist activism is interstitial (existing between the capitalist present and a hoped-for anti-capitalist future), extending the concept to explore other aspects of DIY ethics, such as inclusivity and anti-oppression and discrimination (see 4.2.2). Participants spoke of efforts to

acknowledge how oppressive systems such as patriarchy and heteronormativity, manifest in pervasive, complex and subtle ways, illustrating the complexity of attempts to create culture based on participant ideals. Participants also provided evidence of reflexively (Sultana, 2007) attempting to critique their own attitudes and behaviours, as well as challenging others.

I found that participants utilise rhetoric of authenticity, discursively producing what counts as punk, as a tactical response to the everyday problematics of DIY practice. In this way, they narratively construct (Gordon, 2005) these prefigurative communities, in order to produce hoped-for futures in the present (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). Drawing on the concept of authenticity I do not intend to express what is and is not authentically punk. Here I am interested in how the concept of authenticity is used by participants in the creation and production of DIY punk culture, in line with the underlying epistemology of the project (see 3.1).

This chapter further exemplifies DIY punk cultural resistance as activism, contributing to literature on resistance as multi-layered (see 2.1.2 and 4.4) but taking it further by illustrating how everyday activism (including resistance within the production of alternative praxis, identities, communities and culture) occur through the negotiations of problematics, which are encountered in participant attempts to put DIY ethics into practice.

## **6.1 Vignette 3: the complexities of ‘calling out’ ‘non-punk’ behaviour**

*A couple of years after it was written, a zine published and distributed by an all-male DIY punk band was reviewed for a DIY music blog by Steven Smith<sup>46</sup>. In brief, Steven highlights the many problematic aspects of the zine and why it is (or elements of it are) offensive. He provides examples of where the zine has used*

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<sup>46</sup> The details of the blogger and band have been anonymised as although the blog and the zine were in the public domain, the readership of both publications is relatively small and I was made aware of them as a result of my insider status (see 3.3 on ethical considerations).

offensive language and where the author has made offensive and generalising statements. For example, he quotes the use of terms such as 'faggot', 'slut', 'bitch', 'hooker' and criticises the author's generally degrading, objectifying and insulting portrayal of the women encountered on his tour. Steven describes re-reading the zine a while after his first attempt (where he described being too disgusted with the content to read the full zine). He anticipated that upon re-reading the zine he may have felt less offended by it, as he had not heard anyone else having a similar reaction to it. However, this was not the case and he reported further instances of xenophobia, homophobia, sexism and ableism than anticipated.

Steven's assertion was that he could not find any online discussion or critiquing of the zine, nor its audio-book version published online, in the three years since publication, even though it has been distributed by the band throughout this time. Surprised that the zine had been in circulation for so long without visible online critique, Steven expressed disappointment with the punk scene because the zine had been written in the first place, and had seemingly had generated little criticism.

Steven described disappointment but also a lack of surprise, illuminating a conflict between what he wants and expects 'the punk scene' to be (punk's potential), and what he finds in practice. He does not clarify the boundaries of what he calls 'the punk scene' here, yet at another point in the article discusses the response to the zine by the UK punk scene and has since added an 'edit' to the article, where he discusses a lengthy debate about the zine that occurred on Facebook. What is clear, through the online debates around the zine and the blog that called it out, is that there are expectations held and expressed by many of those commenting that 'punk' in practice is or should be different, more progressive, and more and inclusive than 'mainstream' society, and that punks should be more open-minded and accepting of difference. Even in comments that were in defence of the zine, there were criticisms made based on claims of a lack of sexism in punk (an assumption that is not evidenced), which should allow the zine to be

*read as ironic. There were also criticisms raised that there were other more sexist bands in the DIY punk scene that deserve to be critiqued more, implying that calling out sexism within punk is justified, but not in all cases or should be saved for the more severe cases.*

*This debate was lengthy, heated and at times fairly derailing (such as focusing on the semantics of the blog article rather than on to what extent the zine in question was problematic or not). In several cases, quite harsh language was used and hurtful claims were made, which may have been affected by the discussion taking place in an online forum. Many of those involved in the discussion were friends of the author of the zine, or Steven, or both, adding an interpersonal and emotional element to the discussion. Steven made clear in the review that he did not know the zine's author personally and so the review was specifically about the content of the zine itself. Yet responses were not removed from the zine's author and his personality. Many commenters were quick to defend the zine's author and assure readers of the blog that he is a nice person and should not be attacked. As a result of the online discussion, the zine's author apologised for any offence caused, agreed that Steven's criticisms were justified, and confirmed that he would no longer sell the zine. Yet, those defending him continued. Steven expressed fear of 'backlash' from his blog post and later edited the post to explain that others who had similarly feared negative responses had contacted him to say so.*

Steven's disappointment in 'the scene' indicates that the zine was produced within an imagined DIY punk space and so is scrutinised within that context. These standards are inconsistent and subjective, but general political and social expectations exist regarding inclusivity and equality (as seen in 4.3). Steven's surprise at the lack of criticism that the zine provoked presupposed that the language and attitudes reflected within the zine are never acceptable, but are particularly unacceptable within punk spaces (imagined, online and physical). Culton and Holtzman (2010) found an ideological schism about a band 'selling-out' in the Long island DIY punk scene, which led them to question the scene as



a 'prefigurative space' in which certain values are espoused. Here, the standards that the zine are judged by are in the context of such a prefiguratively imagined space and so Steven is dismayed that certain values have not been upheld. The feelings of disappointment, tension, defensiveness, frustration and indignation, reflected here, then highlight the significance of emotions and space in negotiating activist practices (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Gregson & Rose's, 2000).

The expectations regarding inclusivity and equality relate to notions of authenticity. Participants described a drive within the scene to challenge oppressive practices and hold people to account for behaviours that are disrespectful or offensive (see 6.3.1), but the navigation of such challenges is difficult and volatile. The defence of the author of the zine, based on his personality, and the fear of criticism (or attack) felt by those who opposed it, reflect the sensitivity and emotional factors involved in negotiating the interpersonal aspects of holding others accountable. The personal and the political are so entangled, in the participants' close-knit alternative activist communities, it makes discussions that critique the presence of structural inequality, through participant actions, fraught with difficulty.

The subjectivity and diversity in judgements on how to identify exclusion within DIY punk culture and community, and what tactics should be employed to challenge it, further problematise attempts to put DIY ethics into practice. The responses in this case illustrate different tactics in responding to the zine, there were some who wanted to publically oust the author and remove him from 'the scene', some wanted to critique the behaviour but not the person (attempting separate the individual from the behaviour), some who were unwilling to engage with the critiques made by Steven, and others who responded by defending the right to create art that is offensive, despite the zine's author openly apologising and expressing regret for the contents of the zine. There were also responses that critiqued Steven's tactic as public, saying he should have talked to the author personally.

The vignette illustrates how the negotiations of everyday problematics within punk are key to understanding DIY punk cultural production, particularly constructing DIY punk culture as prefigurative (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Culton & Holtzman, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009). The simultaneous expectation that punk space should be free from, or critical of, sexism, and a lack of surprise when this is not the case, helps illuminate the difficulties experienced in attempting to perform punk politics in practice and the interstitial nature of DIY punk cultural production.

## **6.2 Selling out: authenticity and DIY anti-capitalism**

Concerns about punks 'selling-out' emerged through interviews and observations. Sell-out rhetoric is powerful within punk culture (Gordon, 2005). Selling-out is serious for participants, it means compromising DIY principles and potentially moving on from DIY. 'Selling out' generally refers to individuals and bands being perceived as betraying DIY by no longer practicing DIY anti-capitalist principles, particularly when bands sign contracts with major, 'mainstream' labels. Frustration was expressed by participants about individuals, bands and groups who they thought once had abided by DIY principles and now no longer do. The 'sell-out' rhetoric, found in this research, relates to prevalent debates within punk cultures and punk scholarship about authenticity (Bannister, 2007; Daschuk, 2011; Moore, 2004; Schnitker, 2011). Where punk authenticity relates to participants acting in opposition to the mainstream, then those who are seen to betray this are seen as 'sell-outs'. In a culture so reliant on trust (see 5.2), betrayal is taken seriously by participants.

Participants were concerned about bands using DIY as a '*stepping stone*' to '*bigger and better*' things. A friend who organises shows expressed how they had grown tired of bands who are '*DIY 'til signed*'. The participant explained that these performers espouse DIY principles while it is 'convenient' but will 'sell out' by signing to major labels if the opportunity arises, after benefitting from what DIY

punk culture offers in term of exposure. Authenticity is more than just an expression of what is genuinely punk and a subjective measure of credibility. Punks use discourses of authenticity to construct punk as in opposition to commercialised and capitalist music industry practices. Sell-out rhetoric is reflective of a desire to preserve DIY punk culture and what is produced within and through it. DIY is an anti-capitalist ethic, so profit is not the aim of producing DIY punk alternatives to mainstream forms of cultural production. The DIY record label Plan-It-X Records' slogan of '*If it ain't cheap, it ain't punk*' provides a further example of discourses of authenticity affirming a collective will to ensure that DIY punk produces affordable, and therefore accessible, artefacts and events.

Chris described an '*endless flow*' of bands who move through DIY then sell-out, who use the excuse that when you sell out you can '*reach more people*' with the messages that are commonplace within DIY cultures, an argument that Chris disputes,

*Chris: that doesn't work otherwise it would have already. Once money gets involved things change – power corrupts.*

Concerns about 'selling out' are similar to those found in Culton and Holtzman's (2010) research on a DIY punk scene in Long Island, where discussions arose about a popular band potentially signing a record contract. These ideological schisms threatened the creation of prefigurative spaces, as participants associate their membership of the scene with their commitment to DIY values.

Sell-out rhetoric is utilised in reaction to perceived threats to DIY punk culture. It is also a reaction that aims to enforce and preserve DIY punk ethics. For example, Jacques (2001) discusses the incorporation of Riot Grrrl culture into mainstream culture, despite efforts to resist it. This research then contests Daschuk's (2001, p.621) assertion that,

*As the corporate record industry's hegemony over the process of deducing popular taste and the content of popular artistry has subsided<sup>47</sup>, it is arguable that subcultural narratives surrounding the threat of mainstream co-option have largely become redundant.*

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<sup>47</sup> Due to the proliferation of online information sharing and access to music, reducing the influence that major corporate record labels have over popular taste.

The control that corporate labels have over popular music culture may have decreased, since the growth of online music and information sharing, but Daschuk's (2011) claim underestimates the financial power that major record labels still have for marketing, including contacts to radio stations, television stations, and streaming services. Co-option goes further than just the signing of previously DIY bands to major labels. Participants were aware of the potential corporate co-option of physical DIY punk spaces. For example, in September 2014, 'Death By Audio', a DIY venue in Brooklyn, New York, (a venue that my band played in while on a DIY tour in the USA in May 2014) announced that it would be closing. The reason for its closure was that those running the venue were forced out by a new lease with the multi-national corporation *Vice Media*, with more venues in the area facing threat of closure at the hands of the same company (Evans, 2014; Sargent, 2014). *Noisey* magazine (the music-focused offshoot of *Vice* magazine) simultaneously benefits from appearing to care about DIY culture, through its coverage of DIY bands and artists (seen for example in Knox, 2014; Noisey Staff, 2014 and Schreurs; 2014 articles in *Noisey* on DIY), but simultaneously contributes to the denigration of actual DIY spaces through its parent company *Vice Media*. Stories like this one spread through DIY punk communities quickly and become cautionary tales, which explain participants' mistrust of mainstream media interest in DIY punk culture. Participants expressed fears of misrepresentation, as well as the co-option of DIY punk values. One illustration of this was in the *Guardian*, when Mumford, (2014) used the band Hookworms as an example of a flourishing DIY scene in the UK, while the band themselves openly dispute being labelled as DIY.

Participants wished to avoid the profit-driven capitalist mainstream, yet from the companies who make musical equipment to the alcohol companies who sponsor bars, it seems impossible to organise shows that are not engaged with capitalism in some way. As capitalism resists the opportunities for resistance against it (Thompson, 2012), punk participants find that there are limitations to how able they are to 'do it themselves'. For Samantha, deciding to use a venue that she feels does not align to her personal principles, or the principles of DIY, felt uncomfortable. Nevertheless, she addressed the concern by explaining that as

punk exists within the mainstream, not beyond it, there is a need to engage with 'the mainstream' in order to create punk spaces and events,

*Samantha: ....we've had to put on shows in some quite commercial places, so that's a bit of a struggle but you have to bridge it, because punk is situated within mainstream and that's what makes it alternative, but it makes it difficult to do things sometimes.*

The boundaries between mainstream and alternative cultures are permeable and contested (see 2.3.1), so DIY punk culture exists within, beyond and in opposition to capitalism (mirroring Chatterton & Pickerill's (2010) findings from anti-capitalist activism in a non-punk context). Negotiating a line between acceptable compromise and selling-out is then not always clear-cut and participants took care to contemplate this line in their own actions and the actions of others.

The data revealed the tensions between the anti-capitalist ethics of DIY and the opportunities that are available to people that affect the realities of DIY in practice. Participants contemplate 'how DIY you have to be to *be* DIY', and 'how DIY is it possible to be?' The production of DIY punk culture and community involves the regular weighing up of what options are available versus a commitment to the ethics of DIY (as well as other ethics that are held by DIY participants) and the need to compromise in order to be able to produce DIY culture. This is perhaps best shown in participant attempts to reconcile a DIY punk ethic with opportunities available in the organising of DIY punk shows. Where there is no permanent DIY or DIY punk space available, promoters must use spaces for shows and other events that at all other times may not be punk spaces, temporarily transforming them into a punk space for a DIY punk scene or community (see 4.1 also on DIY punk praxis and space). The process of organising such transformations can be fraught with practical and ethical considerations.

Financial risks occur in DIY, which cause tensions, highlighted in discussions with participants who organise shows. For example, common costs for bands include the costs of recording music, making and distributing records, organising events, touring and the costs of musical instruments and equipment and their upkeep. For Peter, one of the problems, when deciding whether to organise a show or not,

is whether he will be able to cover the costs of hiring a venue and paying the bands,

*Peter: I've played in bands. I've put gigs on, but yeah, I'd like to do it more. It's just the actual getting round to doing it and getting people to turn up to the gig so you can pay the bands. It's never a lot but when no one turns up to a gig then you have to pay out your own pocket.*

As a DIY promoter, Peter's primary concern is not to make money. Still, he needs to be able to cover the costs of venue hire and band payment as a minimum aim, and if more people attend and more money is taken, then the bands get paid more. His concern influences decisions about which bands to book or organise shows for. A popular band is likely to cover his costs, due to a higher attendance. Conversely, a new or less popular band might cost him personally, which is an unsustainable model for organising shows. Further, participants who had organised shows had booked bands because they liked them and wanted to support them regardless of their popularity or exposure, and so had to bear the financial burden themselves when turnout was low or the bands were not paid or were not paid a lot. Peter suffers frustration with his decision making's reliance on money and a lack of support from his local scene (or the lack of a scene) but he is constrained by a system in which money matters and where demand constrains what he is able to do. There is tension between anti-capitalist ethics and financial practicality. There is also tension between anti-capitalist ethics and inclusivity (discussed further in the next section), when promoters want to make events affordable or free for audience members, but also to make performing and touring possible and accessible to people without the resources to cover touring costs themselves.

A further consideration for participants booking venues for DIY shows is the type of venue available and how the venue is funded. For example, a community centre may be more in line with DIY principles but may be more difficult to transform into a suitable music venue than a commercial venue, which compromises or challenges DIY principles (see discussions in 2.1 and 4.3.1 on DIY as anti-capitalist). Jake raised the concern that he wants shows to be available to as many people as possible, but to put on big shows where he lives he would need to use 'commercial venues', which he would not feel comfortable

doing, because that would compromise his DIY principles,

*Jake: I think it's right that people should be able to see the spaces and experience DIY, so maybe it should be made more open to more people. But the way to do that is to use a bigger corporate space and to advertise on a corporate level and sacrifice that [DIY principles].*

Participants face negative consequences if they are seen to 'sell out', as DIY punk culture requires effort to create and maintain. However, the lines between 'DIY' and 'non-DIY' are not always clear-cut. Participants are limited by practicalities and opportunities. Research participants were aware of the limitations of their DIY punk praxis as always somewhat restricted by capitalism. This research then supports Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010, p.488) assertion that attempts to create '*post-capitalist worlds*' are always going to be '*contradictory, interstitial and in the making*' as participants attempt to negotiate priorities in ethics, praxis and opportunity. The negotiation of the constraints and the tensions they cause are vital to understanding DIY cultural production and its complexities.

### **6.3 Inclusion and exclusion in DIY punk**

There are tensions between attempts to encourage inclusion and instances of exclusion and oppressive practices that occur in DIY punk. Interconnected with practical issues of inclusivity such as cost, age restrictions, accessibility and availability, participants also discussed their wish to encourage involvement and interest in DIY. Participant accounts illustrate the complexities of prefigurative cultural production, which aims to be inclusive and promote equality.

One dilemma faced when booking shows for some promoters is the consideration of whether or not they can ensure that shows are accessible to people under eighteen years, by finding a venue without an age restriction. Here the significance of place-based opportunities becomes apparent again (see 4.3.3 and 5.2.2). Several participants discussed a desire to be inclusive for people under the age of eighteen. As a person who adheres to a straight edge lifestyle and a proponent of DIY shows being all-ages, the lack of venues, which are not licensed or do not rely on a bar selling alcohol, has put Peter in a difficult position, requiring

him to make ethical compromises. As discussed in the literature review (see 2.2), the straight edge movement has a strong history of promoting DIY and hardcore punk as an all-ages venture. So, venues that do not rely on the sale of alcohol and that are all-ages (or at least fourteen or sixteen plus) are where Peter would prefer to hold his shows. He attributes this commitment to his straight edge way of life. Yet the type of show that he is able to arrange is restricted to the venues available, causing him an ethical dilemma and requiring him to compromise each time he organises a show.

Chris and Denise both declared that DIY should not exclude under-eighteen year olds, in their definitions of the phenomenon,

Chris: *DIY should be all ages.*

Denise: *It's about putting on shows and stuff and making sure everyone has a good time, and all ages. You know? Being positive with one another.*

However, this goal can be difficult to achieve, especially for scenes in towns with few suitable venues. Peter, Denise and Beth all expressed a willingness or desire to make the events they put on all-ages but explained that this is not always the most financially viable option, as venues that are all ages, where the hire of rooms is not subsidised by bar-takings, are often hard to find. Therefore, despite participants aiming to make shows inclusive for all participants, in practice under-eighteen year olds are often excluded due to limited venue options and financial restrictions. Another example of the negotiation of venue inclusivity was when participants expressed a desire to make shows inclusive for people who might have difficulty physically accessing some venues (particularly wheelchair users), yet shows continue to take place in inaccessible venues. Participants are constantly negotiating ethics versus opportunities (as well as individual priorities and levels of commitment).

Another factor related to inclusion is the tension between trying to encourage participation and the aim to cement feelings of belonging, through the strengthening of a sense of collective identity. This research showed that participants struggle to keep scenes alive where turnout is not reliable (as seen by Peter's difficulties in deciding which bands to book shows for). Encouraging



involvement and securing the support of local 'scenes' (audiences) can be difficult, with tensions in trying to ensure that punk shows are appealing to people, but also wanting to preserve what makes DIY culture alternative and unique. Jake talked about how he must reconcile his desire to arrange DIY (punk) shows and events that are inclusive and welcoming, with the need to protect DIY punk from diminution as a result of wider appeal,

*Jake: Like, it [DIY punk] is the way it is because it is obscure and because it's not easy to find, like you have to stumble on it. But should it be accessible? I feel like I'd like for everyone to experience it but not everyone has the same values so it wouldn't be the same space or place if everyone was involved in it and maybe that's what makes it what it is.*

Jake was concerned that potential participants may not be able to enjoy the benefits that he has found in his involvement in DIY, because DIY culture can be hard to find, and confidence may be required to access it. Jake described how he had found going to events on his own very intimidating, even when held within DIY spaces,

*Jake: It took me three times before I went into the [DIY social centre] because it was so bare and sometimes there'd just be a few people and they wouldn't talk to you because it's different people each time. So it took me a couple of times going to feel comfortable in that space. So I'm sure that'd be the case for other's going to new spaces.*

Having been in the position of feeling like an outsider, Jake could relate to feelings that getting involved in DIY events could be difficult and that spaces could appear socially unwelcoming or intimidating. Hence the conflict he felt about encouraging more people to get involved in DIY, while preserving what makes DIY cultures unique and special. He wants to share the aspects of DIY that he had found very influential and positive in his life, helping him to learn about veganism, anarchism, feminism and queerness and thus to explore and understand his own identity. Yet, he did not want to 'sacrifice' what makes DIY so powerful for the sake of broader appeal. There are insecurities involved in participants aiming to produce prefigurative DIY culture according to complexly interconnected ethics and identities.

Denise related her difficulties in trying to get new people to come to shows.

*Denise: It's frustrating sometimes when you do turn up to a DIY show that we have put on and it's just the same faces. Like, it's nice when you see different people, and, like, younger people.... Like when at [all-ages event held in a community centre] and... when [a 14 year old punk] brought her friends, I thought it was really good ... when we get ...slightly bigger bands, or a bigger place .....it's good 'cause, like, a lot more people turn up.*

Denise feels a sense of belonging, yet acknowledged that it might be hard going to a show if you do not know anyone, especially if a lot of people seem to know each other when you get there (it might feel '*cliquey*'). She therefore explained that she tries to be accommodating and welcoming. Denise experienced a conflict between inviting more people to be involved in her events, and her feelings of enjoyment, safety and comfort within spaces where there are a lot of people that she has grown to know and trust. Concerns are high about endeavouring to create and maintain a thriving local scene, trying to encourage involvement, and the awareness of the need to protect the fragile 'hoped-for future' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010) that participants are in the process of creating.

Due to DIY punk participants' desire for inclusivity, they had expectations that there would be no sexism, ableism, racism and other forms of oppression within DIY punk. Participants gave accounts of their experience of the reproduction of oppressive practices within DIY punk culture. Daphne described how it was for her as a '*non-white woman hanging out in spaces that are predominantly white punks*', explaining that though she was often one of a few non-white people attending punk shows, she has never encountered an oppressive reaction to her ethnicity. Yet, she expressed an expectation that she may, or others may, at other times,

*Daphne: Nobody in the DIY punk scene has ever done anything directly that would make me think that [my ethnicity] was an issue in any way. But that's what you would think normally, but then there's people in the punk scene who are sometimes sexist and you're like 'what?!'*

Daphne recognises the limitations of punk spaces as fully inclusive and free from oppressive attitudes. Even in the absence of directly oppressive practices in relation to race and ethnicity, the low number of people of colour at the shows that Daphne attends reflects an imbalance in identity representations within her

scene and potentially more pervasive structural inequalities, reflected in absence as well as action. These negotiations, imbalances, and absences demonstrate the difficulty of implementing such complex ethics in practice. Daphne negotiates her expectation that, in spaces where the audience are predominantly white, people of colour (particularly woman) may feel alienated by identity imbalances in participation, through making efforts to be welcoming to people she does not recognise. She expanded,

Daphne: *when I see anyone who isn't white at a show I always make an effort to talk to them, or at least give them a nod \*laughs\*. You know? Solidarity.*

Sexist behaviours were discussed by all participants. When asked about problems in the 'scene' Jake's first concern was sexism,

Jake: *I think dealing with sexists, it happens every now and then. Like a band will play and you'll know they're dicks and they're really annoying. And that's a thing that happens on a smaller level. And \*pause\* I dunno. You just know when you see it.*

He seemed to struggle to articulate exactly what he meant by sexism in the punk scene, and made the point that these encounters happen 'every now and again' rather than as a constant. Yet, it was clear that the presence of sexism within punk spaces was a great concern for Jake,

Jake: *I feel more positive when I've come out of a show and have seen a band that's all female or something like that. I think that's a good thing and it's always positive. It's nice to be at a show that's not dominated by men. That's all benefits. But I think at the same time there's a thing where women are in bands, and especially men will view it like 'oh wow, she's actually good'. They're shocked and that makes me sad. It's so ignorant. If they just looked they'd find that there's loads of bands but they don't get the spotlight because it's overrun by men with beards.*

Jake refers to a gender imbalance at some shows and also a concern about the objectification of female performers. By using the term 'men with beards' he is implying a particular type of masculinity or maleness and a view of masculine superiority, which he identifies as present in punk scenes or spaces that he sees as negative. He did not claim that 'men' or 'beards' in particular are the problem, but that gender imbalances, sexist attitudes and narrow-mindedness remain in some DIY punk spaces and scenes. He expressed how the individuals who

attend or perform at shows, and how they behave, affect how he enjoys the space.

Cheryl described being asked patronising questions, as a drummer in several bands, over the years. She explained that she is tired of being asked questions while she is setting up her drum kit, such as, ‘*Do you know how to put all this up?*’ She clarified that it is often ‘sound men’<sup>48</sup> who have asked her these questions. In one-to-one conversations, she described an awkward power relationship where there is a desire to ensure that your band will sound good, by working with the ‘sound men’, but also to challenge being patronised. Though Cheryl described many similar experiences, she continues to find these situations difficult to respond to, generally resorting to an eye roll, at a loss for what else to do. Hatcher (2011), a London based DIY punk show promoter, wrote an article about her experiences for the blog ILiveSweat, in a series about gender and punk. She explained that there has been a growth in the recognition of female performers, yet female promoters are still often overlooked and not given the same respect as male promoters.

*It’s a widely known truth that we need to change the view that all band members are men, but it’s not often mentioned that there are women working in different areas of the scene that deserve the same level of respect. (Hatcher, 2011, p.1)*

It seemed from discussions that some shows just *feel* more inclusive and comfortable for participants. From discussions and observations, it was clear that just one sentence can completely change the atmosphere of a room, making it feel more or less inclusive for different participants. For example, on the topic of gender, a band that makes a statement about their commitment to challenging sexism in a scene may, but not necessarily, make the space feel more inclusive. If a band says something openly sexist into the microphone that is likely to make at least some of the audience feel uncomfortable, especially if there is an

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<sup>48</sup> Cheryl is referring to male sound engineers, those with the job of managing the PA system, particularly balancing the sound levels of instruments and vocals. Cheryl explained that most people with this role in her experience had been male. Cheryl noted, however, that some sound engineers may have been hired by the promoter for the event or work at the venue and therefore not necessary self-identified DIY punks.

apparent implicit acceptance of what has been said. Similarly, on an individual level, female performers described being asked, when they enter a venue, if they are with the band, affecting their experience of the space. Alyssa Kai (2014, p.1) of Ramshackle Glory, describing her experiences as a transgender punk performer, illustrates the complexity of DIY punk inclusivity and the fragility and instability of punk spaces as 'inclusive',

*But it's never perfect, and it's occasionally awful: without warning, in the audience or on a stage, I'll hear someone say, "This song is about feminism, which means: How hard it is to have a vagina in this world!" or "I saw Ralph in a dress the other day, that was pretty funny" or "That last songwriter, he was pretty cool". And I'm suddenly rocking out here on the outside, but only listening in on the thing I love. And even if I don't walk out, I'm still gone, excluded from the supposedly ultra-inclusive community I'm trying to build.*

DIY punk spaces vary in their inclusivity for participants. Some factors that affect inclusivity are predictable and other are less so, dependant on venue, promoter, bands playing, audience, and the attitudes of those there, particularly of those performing. The diversity of those attending can affect feelings of inclusion, depending on factors such as particular scenes, towns, venues, and if there is a stark (visible or felt) identity imbalance.

## **6.4 Recognising and challenging exclusion in DIY punk**

Research participants were aware of the perniciousness of oppressive societal structures. Recognising the limitations of their prefigurative cultural production, based on the purporting of fully inclusive ideals, participants utilise various tactics to challenge exclusion within punk culture to help create their 'hoped-for futures' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010).

These research findings support Ensminger's (2010) suggestion that punk can produce liminal zones (where oppressive systems, such as homophobia and sexism, may be temporarily suspended), but that in practice there are conflicts and contradictions. For example, spaces may be created in which queer politics are promoted, while hetero-normative assumptions and homophobic behaviours and perceptions may remain in those and/or other DIY punk spaces (Ensminger,

2010; Leblanc, 1999; Mullaney, 2007). The discussion on the reproduction of oppressive practices within punk culture is relevant here (see 2.2.2). Some groups, such as LaDIYfest Sheffield, have developed an official safe spaces policy to be abided by at the events that they organise, mapping out how individuals attending events are expected to behave to ensure that they are respectful of others in the space. It explains,

*LaDIYfest Sheffield events are run on the insistence that all attendees will be respectful and thoughtful to all other attendees, participants and organisers. This means no individual should be made to feel uncomfortable or oppressed by any other individual's opinions or actions. (LaDIYfest Sheffield, 2013, p1)*

The policy encourages participants to be reflective about their behaviour and ensure they do not dominate discussions or act inconsiderately. It also explains that '*harassment, hostility and aggression*' will not be tolerated and individuals may be asked to leave if they do not abide by the policy. However, implementing safer spaces policies in practice can be difficult, as boundaries of consideration and respect can be contested. Attempts to create safer spaces, and the negotiations therein, illustrate participants actively working *with* space to realise prefigurative social, political and cultural goals.

Participants use different media to create inclusive punk cultures. For example, bands use song lyrics as well as the stage as a platform for raising concerns, as well as in interviews and other media, to challenge exclusion within punk spaces. In another ILiveSweat article in the Sexism in Punk series, Settles (2011, p.1) discusses her experiences as a female performer and her encounters with sexism. She outlines the pleasure and comfort she feels when she enters a space where there is a clear presence of literature that challenges oppressive attitudes, yet reasons that more is needed to remove intolerant and discriminatory attitudes from punk spaces,

*I feel grateful every time I walk into a show space and find zines about immigrants' rights, ableism, and feminism. It's really amazing that through this sort of do-it-yourself/do-it-together ethic we've managed to loosely knit together a family for a lot of folks who didn't feel welcome in other crowds. Sometimes though, there are circumstances where a zine library or a "safe space" sign isn't enough. We have to be ready to create dialogue and really challenge the actions that oppress us, or be willing to listen and try to educate ourselves and one another even if we aren't the ones who are*

*feeling oppressed.*

Creating safer punk spaces involves taking responsibility for a space and actively trying to promote an inclusive environment. It was found that this task can be difficult, as how people experience social inclusions and exclusions inevitably vary and so the development of safer spaces requires delicate and ongoing debate, discussion and negotiation.

There are attempts to challenge exclusionary and oppressive practices within punk communities and spaces, some of which are discussed above, through 'calling out' (seen, for example, in this chapter's vignette, 6.1) or highlighting oppressive practices within punk and trying to acknowledge the issue of privilege. Cheryl expressed her desire to ensure that DIY punk produces safe and inclusive spaces. She expressed an expectation that people will be 'called out' for behaviour that is detrimental to this objective,

*Cheryl: Punk is a mind-set which is about being politically aware... There's an expectation that people will be called out if they say or do something which does not fit with a DIY punk ethic.*

The 'calling out' Cheryl refers to includes questioning and critiquing sexist, racist, ablest, homophobic, transphobic and other discriminatory language and behaviours.

Calling others out was described as intimidating and difficult to negotiate, particularly when individuals anticipated a negative reaction (see 6.1), but instances of 'calling out' seems to be becoming more expected or anticipated. In explaining why she avoids attending shows organised by a promoter that she feels is sexist, Samantha implied that sharing spaces with the promoter, and others that she feared were also sexist, made her feel uncomfortable,

*Samantha: It's not that I avoid confrontation, 'cause I can back up my shit when it comes to it, but sometimes it's like there is no good that can come of it and it's not worth putting myself in a situation where I'll get stressed and unhappy and just get negative things from it.*

The above quote illustrates an anticipation of a reaction from the promoter. Although this may not be the result of her attending a show that he is involved in and talking to him about it, her expectation of what would happen was strong

enough for her to boycott his shows, even if she wanted to see the band.

Authenticity is relevant again here, as ‘call-out’ rhetoric was sometimes used in a similar way to ‘sell-out’ rhetoric. Punk’s authenticity is conceptualised as its divergence from mainstream culture, and so punk scholarship has tended to focus on the debates around authenticity that occur when bands ‘sell-out’ in terms of commercialisation and engaging with more capitalist mainstream music industries (Bannister, 2007; Daschuk, 2011; Moore, 2004; Schnitker, 2011). However, research participants also used discourses of authenticity with regards to inclusivity and challenging oppressive societal structures. Samantha discussed a conflict she experiences as a women, a promoter and a fan of punk music as a result of her disagreement with the promoter discussed above. She believes he should not be involved in DIY punk culture because of his attitudes, as he was only interested in money and credit (or ‘scene points’/‘punk points’) and was sexist too,

*Samantha: Yeah, I also feel the need to oust him from the punk label – the punk movement, because he’s just such an ass-hole and he’s such a sexist and he’s so frustrating. I’m annoyed that someone as reactionary as him, it’s like he reads the Daily Mail or something, is involved.*

Samantha did not want share punk spaces with this promoter and did not want to support his shows. Therefore, her reaction to this promoter’s ethics (or the lack of that she criticised him for) and sexism was to not go to shows that he is part of.

This research contends that participants used discourses of authenticity for more than just a distinction between punk and the mainstream. They use discourses of authenticity to reinforce the legitimacy of their identities and to establish boundaries between those individuals and actions that are inside, rather than outside, punk (consistent with the work of Daschuk, 2011; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1990; 1995). By describing certain behaviours as ‘punk’ or as ‘not punk’, participants use rhetoric of authenticity as a tactic to narratively construct DIY punk in accordance with their ethics. Samantha challenged the presence of sexism within punk spaces, in this case by boycotting the shows of a promoter who she described as misogynistic. She described a disconnect in bands, who



are anti-sexist, unknowingly playing shows that a misogynistic promoter has organised,

*Samantha: It is the same in form but not in content. Like fair enough, this [name] guy puts on shows by himself and he organises it and everything but that's not punk. That's not punk!*

More than saying she should not encounter sexism in punk, because it is discriminatory and not-inclusive, Samantha is asserting that sexism is fundamentally not punk. Samantha makes a distinction between cultural production that she sees as positive and liberating and truly punk and cultural production that only *appears* to be punk. Similar to the negotiation in this chapter's vignette (6.1), Samantha's negotiation illustrates the complexity of developing 'hoped-for-futures' and the complexity of DIY cultural production, because someone may 'seem' authentically DIY punk, but in practice may betray ethics that Samantha sees as fundamentally not.

Participants also gave examples of how they had tried to reflexively critique and challenge the ways in which they may contribute to inequalities and exclusion. Evelyn explained that she used to judge other women who did not shave their body hair, for example, she explained that *'I would never have said anything mean to someone with hairy legs, but all it takes is a negative facial expression'*. Now, as previously discussed, she no longer shaves her legs or armpits. Jake's feelings about making music were connected to a personal critique of his privilege as a male performer. Jake described feelings of conflict about song writing and performance. For Jake, music-making was how he could express personal concerns and anxieties in a way that he felt was more appropriate than what he found in 'mainstream' outlets. Nevertheless, Jake was concerned about 'taking up space' as one of many solo male performers within the scene he is part of. Yet he remained motivated by a desire to contribute to dialogues that question common discourses, around issues of sexuality and mental health, drawing from his own experiences,

*Jake: A lot of the time I feel really selfish and I go through phases where I really dislike myself. Well, mainly writing songs. And I feel like I'm taking up space and it's been said before but then I think I should be saying this and I like to share my experiences of things that are talked about in the mainstream in weird ways. Like mental health and sexuality. And I like to share my feelings*

*on that. That's a reason I do it. ... I feel like with music people are more inclined to not be so judgemental when. Say, if I was to write something in a zine about experiences I've had or mental health or sexuality I don't really feel comfortable doing that but in a song I feel different. I feel more comfortable. ... But I love reading other peoples so I don't know why I feel like I'll be judged if I do but something in my head tells me I will.*

Bessa explained that they had grown to love their '*fat legs*' through engaging with body-positive politics (see also 4.3.2). They reflect on the negativity they have felt towards their body as a result of societal pressure, and more direct experiences of judgement and bullying. They address the importance of problematizing and challenging often unachievable societal beauty standards and recognising that '*all bodies are beautiful*'. Their engagement with body-positive politics encouraged them to actively form a more positive relationship with their own body, explaining that they need to challenge body prejudice by loving their own body, as well as recognising and promoting the beauty in others' bodies. Thus, challenging oppressive practices can involve participants reflexively critiquing themselves and their own attitudes and behaviours, including reflecting on perceptions of the self. Such oppressive practices may be more overtly oppressive, and others may be more subtle.

Samantha also recalled how discussions that challenge oppressive attitudes had helped her to develop personally. Such discussions have helped her to further recognise the prevalence and perniciousness of oppressive practices and discriminatory attitudes, including her own. She had benefitted from discussing her internal conflicts and compromises with others she felt are on her 'wavelength' and liked that meeting people through DIY punk allows a collective yet personal reflexivity. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that there were some punk spaces where she felt comfortable saying '*yeah, I don't know everything*', to open a dialogue but there were also punk spaces where she thought being open about her limitations could make her vulnerable to criticism. There are spaces that feel more conducive to dialogue about oppressive practices and others that are less so.

Challenging attitudes and behaviours deemed negative is fundamental to DIY punk as activism and the production of DIY punk culture as alternative to dominant culture. Participants have collective and personal ideas about what counts as authentically punk, which participants use in the narrative construction of their DIY punk cultures, communities and identities. The collective drawing of these boundaries, and the narrative construction of punk culture and community, are ongoing and negotiable, reflecting the messiness of attempts to create prefigurative culture and community in practice based on abstract ideals (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Nicholas, 2005; 2009).

## **6.5 'I'm quitting punk'; dropping out and burning out**

'Burning out', by becoming too tired from the physical, practical and emotional work that DIY cultural production can require and from disillusionment, was a concern for participants. In order to create or maintain a thriving scene, it is important that participants stay interested, supported and active. These are concerns for scenes and individuals. As previously discussed, DIY cultural production can be hard and emotional work. There is the work that goes into learning instruments, the organisational and promotional work that goes into putting on shows (including artistic work when creating flyers) the physical work of setting up and transporting equipment, and there is the interpersonal and emotional work involved in community interactions and development. The findings have resonance with Kovan and Dirkx's (2003, p.113) research, which acknowledges the tiring effects of '*juggling hope and despair*' that occurs in activism.

Participants have to manage the threat of burning out themselves. The majority of DIY punk participants are balancing commitments to DIY punk activity with other life commitments, such as working full time while also running a record label or organising and promoting shows,

Jo: *Oh man. I could really do with a day in bed.*

Me: *Well have one. You're on holiday*

Jo: *Yeah but I've got shit to do. I've got to sort the artwork for this album,*

*finish organising a tour and I need to make a flyer for a show.*

The above quote, from a conversation with a friend, illustrates some of the unpaid work that goes into some of the activities that are key to DIY cultural punk production, which for Jo is undertaken in-between studying full-time and working part time. As shown in 4.2 and 5.3, hard work is involved in attempts to produce and support DIY punk culture. This work is physical, emotional and interpersonal. The negotiation of the problematics, discussed in this chapter, is also tiring. Working out compromises between DIY and more 'mainstream' music industry practices, navigating issues of what, where and how to produce DIY punk cultural spaces and events and the ethical and social debates that arise, can all contribute to a feeling that remaining DIY is hard work.

The phrase 'support your scene' was used in a similar way to 'sell-out' rhetoric, to encourage DIY punk participation and as a tactic to discourage dropping out or burning out by scene participants. The phrase 'support your scene' recurred in conversations as well as being printed on flyers and posters for some shows. It enforces an expectation that people should attend shows, not just because they want to see the bands performing but also to ensure that organising shows remains sustainable and that the scene thrives. Such rhetoric attempts to nurture pride and commitment to a scene rather than viewing shows as individual events, a tactic that responds to the fragility of local scenes by strengthening communality.

Participants can grow tired of the negotiations that have been discussed in this chapter, which can lead to feeling burned-out. One particularly disillusioning factor is the recurrence of intolerant attitudes and oppressive practices. Participants described frustration with the continual need to challenge and exasperation with the negative responses that challenging oppressive practices can invoke. Piano (2003) quotes a zine that expresses similar frustrations similar frustrations leading to the author 'quitting punk',

*The day I quit punk rock was the day I found out that while the boys love to talk about how they aren't sexist and how oh-so-fucking-PC they are, it never seems cool to be a girl in the scene (Sarah, The Day I Quit Punk*

rock (one off zine, n.d., quoted in Piano, 2003, p.253)

As illustrated above (in 6.3), different spaces and activities can feel safe or unsafe for people depending on their identities. Daphne talked about feeling uncomfortable and often unsafe at protests, specifically protest marches held to oppose marches or gatherings of fascists groups, such as the EDL and the BNP. But she felt under pressure to take part as a result of her being punk,

*Daphne: Like, in the DIY scene you acknowledge privilege, then you have the EDL come to a place near you and you....I think the university ... encouraged the students not to go to the centre of town at that time. And I didn't feel like going to the centre of town at that time but then I spoke to someone about it and then they said 'well then they've won', but then if I go there and I get hit in the face then that's a different thing. Like, that's a level of discomfort that maybe is a different thing. It's experienced differently, between two people who might go to that protest.*

*Me: Was the person white?*

*Daphne: yeah*

*Me: were they male?*

*Daphne: Yeah*

*Me: were they punk?*

*Daphne: Yeah*

When so much about DIY punk participation is about collectivity and community, where inter-personal support is vital, it is understandable that if participants do not feel supported then burn-out is more likely to occur, and more likely to last longer. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006) constructs unreasonable expectations, like those described by Daphne, as part of sell-out rhetoric that ignores privilege. Daphne's case then illustrates how sell-out rhetoric can be problematic in some cases. Participants can burn-out and grow tired of certain discourses. Experiences of intolerance and discrimination within DIY punk spaces and communities, especially when unchallenged and recurring, can increase the likelihood of burn-out (mirroring Brown and Pickerill's (2009) research on autonomous activists). This finding supports Brown and Pickerill's (2009) and Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006) assertion that greater attention to burning out (rather than selling out) within activist discourses is needed. Identifying when 'selling-out' or dropping out is actually burning-out could mean that strategies can

be employed to reduce the risks of burning out. Griffin (2011) assesses the different strategies that feminist activists use to try to stay motivated in their activism, and to not succumb to the fear, anger and stress that such activism can cause. Strategies included individual strategies, such as employing a sense of humour when faced with intolerance, as well as the role of community support. Though the people I interviewed were all still active DIY punk participants, there were references made to when they had felt challenged, tired or burned out (see discussion about Samantha's support from close and like-minded friends keeping her motivated, in 5.3).

Participants noted that people access DIY punk culture from different points and at different times. Daphne's involvement in feminist activism led her to her local punk scene. Cheryl was given a mix CD that included DIY punk bands. Bessa '*stumbled across*' a show in their small town where '*not much happens*' and met Chris who runs Plan-it-X records. Taking into account the different points of access, and awareness of DIY punk culture, serves to highlight the different points at which participants become aware of, or engage with, the debates about privilege and oppression that many participants are struggling with. Education and knowledge sharing is vital but also tiring. There are also those who are uninterested or unwilling to engage with debates that challenge oppressive practices in punk spaces, which is an even greater obstacle for activists.

Settles (2011, p.1) is hopeful about DIY punk change but acknowledges that truly inclusive punk culture takes work,

*Once we've accomplished a truly safe space in the punk scene, we can have more shows, more friends, better turn outs, more bands, and more grrls.*

She remains optimistic and attempts to encourage further progress towards a more inclusive DIY punk. She expresses that the inspiration of the DIY movement lies in not accepting the way things are if you are not happy with them (see 4.3.3 on the role of dissatisfactions in motivating action),

*There isn't any reason that we have to accept anything because it's "just the way it's always been". The DIY scene bloomed out of this same realisation. Our community is able to grow because of the folks who don't*

*hesitate when they're told that something is going to be hard work.*  
(Settles, 2011, p.1)

Chris presents a more cynical optimism. When introducing a song about the positive things that punks do, he aims to discourage disillusionment with punk by illustrating how punk still remains closer to DIY punk's collective hoped-for-future than mainstream culture,

*Chris: If you're feeling sick of punk, just go spend some time with some normal people, then you'll feel better about it \*laughs\*.*

Though the tone was of witty cynicism, Chris was asking others to recognise the progress that punk has made, to stay hopeful and to try not become disheartened or disillusioned when experiencing attitudes that alienate, offend, or affect enjoyment of punk.

Participants were concerned about the effect of dropping out of their scenes (particularly in small scenes where the fragility of punk cultural production may be of greater concern), but some participants also expressed disillusionment as a result of the tiresome and ongoing negotiations that are required in the production of DIY punk culture. Encouraging people to remain positive and to keep supporting punk scenes and discouraging dropping out, selling out or burning out is challenging but is key to the ongoing production of punk spaces and the development and progress of DIY punk communities. Intersectionality teaches that oppression is multi-layered and complex, and so challenging oppressive practices and the acknowledgement of privilege is also complex (see 4.3.2 on the interconnectedness of DIY ethical resistances). DIY punk is far from static, and the growth and sustenance of DIY punk culture requires ongoing negotiations, battles, challenges to create safer DIY punk spaces for DIY punk communities.

## **6.6 Conclusions**

Participants narratively construct DIY punk culture through ongoing negotiations of everyday problematics. DIY punk culture is also produced through the ways that participants create and use (or do not use) DIY punk spaces as a result of such negotiations. Data analysis showed authenticity to be a strong theme. It

extended beyond a resistance to mainstream media co-option of punk and resistance to mainstream music industry practices, which has tended to be the focus of scholarship on punk authenticity. For the research participants, DIY punk authenticity, as well as being anti-capitalist, relied on the rejection of oppressive social structures and the challenging of oppressive behaviours, including patriarchy, sexism, racism, homophobia, heteronormativity, ableism and transphobia.

Claims about certain behaviours and attitudes not being punk relate to sell-out rhetoric, which is prevalent, usually in relation of DIY anti-capitalist practices. The ideological schisms and personal tensions, reflected in 6.2, were similar to those found in Culton and Holtzman's (2010) research on a DIY punk scene in Long Island (in reported debates about a popular band potentially signing a record contract). Their findings support this research's theorising of DIY punk place-based yet imagined communities, as not only do scenes in different places share consciousness, they also share examples of ideological schism. Participants used similar rhetoric, to reinforce the collective consciousness and desires of the movement, by making examples of those who do not adhere to what participants considered DIY principles. This research found that selling-out is complex and the disappointment, anger and frustration in response to selling-out extends beyond issues of bands signing to major labels and no longer 'doing it themselves', in terms of music production and distribution. It also extends to instances where attitudes and practices challenge the production of DIY punk culture as prefigurative. However, research participants were aware of the perniciousness of oppressive societal structures and the limitations of their prefigurative cultural production, based on fully inclusive ideals. So, participants utilise tactics of 'calling out' and the rhetoric of authenticity to construct their *'hoped-for futures in the present'* (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010, p.475), providing examples of activist tactics used in the production of alternative cultures.

Finally, the data reflects DIY punk activism's multi-layered and multi-scalar nature, by illustrating how everyday practices and the negotiation of ethical dilemmas and conflicts, in multiple spaces and places, and at multiple scales,



contribute to the production of alternative modes of production, cultures, identities and communities. The analysis in this chapter also provides further examples that illustrate that DIY punk cultural production is more than simply resistance (see 2.2.1 and 4.4). This chapter then further supports DIY punk cultural production as activism.

## 7.0 Thesis Conclusions

As the final chapter in the thesis, this chapter draws together the whole research project through a summary of the thesis and by synthesising the research findings. The thesis began with an introduction to the field of study and my personal interest in DIY punk. It also drew attention to the wider context, highlighting public attention to, and media interest in, diverse forms of activism, where common causes and international support for shared objectives has been discernible through global networks, facilitated by social media. Next my review of the literature identified gaps in scholarship in relation to developing an adequate understanding of DIY punk cultural production, which draws together lessons learned from multiple disciplines, particularly sociology, geography, and cultural studies. This second chapter highlighted concerns about narrow definitions of activism and proposed the development of a more inclusive conceptualisation of activism (Chatterton, 2006; Downes, 2008; Horton & Kraftl, 2009; Martin et al., 2007; Maxey, 1999; 2004), within which I situated my own research. I demonstrated how the complexity of the politics and ethics associated with DIY culture require recognition, as does the diversity of DIY activist tactics. The review situated my research within limited, but growing, literature that attempts to develop understanding of DIY participation and the realisation of DIY ethics. Finally, a particular deficit in engagement with the concept of community as a concept significant to participants, in the context of DIY punk, was identified. The literature review suggested utilising the work of geographers on imagined communities. It proposed that the concept could be utilised to illustrate the collectivity and connectedness of DIY punk practices and identities, while also addressing concerns about a tendency in punk scholarship to over-state the international homogeneity of punk culture, by recognising the importance of place in DIY punk cultural production and participation. As a result, the following research questions were identified:

To what extent can attempts to realise DIY ethics through DIY punk participation be understood as activism, and what tactics are employed by participants in the

creation of DIY punk culture?

Sub-questions:

1. How do DIY punks define, express and negotiate DIY ethics?
2. What does community mean in a DIY punk context and what role do community, networks and relationships play in DIY punk cultural production?
3. How do participants negotiate the problematics that they encounter in their cultural production and what do these negotiations tell us about the potentialities of DIY cultural production as activism?

After identifying research questions, the following methodology chapter outlines how the research questions and lessons learned from the literature review were translated into an appropriate research design. The debates in the literature review supported small scale research, to gain in-depth understanding of DIY punk participation, cultural production, participant interactions and identities, and the importance of place. Punk scholarship has been criticised for lacking ethnographic grounding, for relying on inadequate simplifications of punk culture, and for focusing on debates that are of little significance or interest to punk participants (Furness, 2012; Moore, 2007). Such critiques informed my interpretivist and 'insider' ethnographic research, developed through an epistemological and methodological discussion in this third chapter.

This concluding chapter synthesises the research findings and analysis (in chapters 4, 5 and 6) that demonstrate how DIY punk is a relevant and rich area for scholarship. It begins with a discussion of the empirical findings of the research. It then illustrates the theoretical implications of the thesis, including how the findings and methodology contribute to scholarship. It continues by providing recommendations for future research, and suggests ways to build on what has been developed through this thesis. The chapter concludes with some final reflections on the project.

## 7.1 Empirical Findings

This section provides a synthesis of the empirical findings with respect to the individual research questions. This section is organised into sub-sections designed to answer each of the sub-research questions. This leads to a discussion (7.1.4) that synthesises the answers to of all three sub-questions in order to answer the over-arching research question: *To what extent can attempts to realise DIY ethics through DIY punk participation be understood as activism, and what tactics are employed by participants in the creation of DIY punk culture?* This section broadly provides summaries to each analysis chapter (as each analysis chapter broadly relates to each of the research sub-questions), but there is over-lap in synthesis as this section aims to draw findings together.

### 7.1.1 How do DIY punks define, actualise and negotiate DIY ethics?

The first analysis chapter (Chapter 4) discussed what I found about how participants understand 'DIY ethics' and related the findings to the review of the literature (see Chapter 2). Data analysis revealed a DIY ethic that is foremost anti-capitalist, but is interconnected with, and influenced by, many political and cultural movements and schools of thought. Participants particularly referred to feminism, socialism, Marxism, queer culture and politics, the animal rights movement, autonomism, and grass roots organising, as well as politically motivated musical movements such as Riot Grrrl and the straight-edge movement. There were inconsistencies in ethical commitments and priorities between participants, but there were commonalities too, and a felt collective consciousness. There were implicit and explicit expectations of inclusivity and a rejection of discriminatory attitudes and practices.

Data analysis supported work, which has highlighted punk participants' rejection of aspects of mainstream society deemed negative. The discussion reflected on developments in post-subcultural studies, which have critiqued the notion of 'the mainstream', recognising that a homogenous dominant culture is implausible when we consider the complexity of culture. Yet, this research also acknowledged

that a perceived dominant culture is significant to DIY punk participation, interconnected ethics, and cultural production. This is consistent with Clark's (2003) conceptualisation of a 'mainstream' culture that is imagined while recognising the real felt presence of a 'mainstream'.

Alternative anti-capitalist modes of production were evident in band merchandise practices and prices, and in the critiquing of and resistance to more corporate music industry practices. Other examples emerged through the interconnectedness of DIY ethics, whereby participants critique structural inequalities and discrimination through the production of alternative culture, praxis and narrative discourses. DIY punk shows were a key site at which DIY ethics are represented and enacted in practice, but participants disclosed how a DIY ethic is embedded in many aspects of their lives, in their relationships, lifestyles choices, and actions. The everyday is then fundamental to understanding how a DIY ethic is created, negotiated and realised. The extent to which participants felt committed to a DIY ethic outside of a DIY punk show context varied, but all interview participants made reference to DIY's connection to their personal politics and outlook.

The data supports Moore & Roberts (2009) conceptualisation of a DIY ethic as a mechanism for mobilisation, as it encourages participants to act autonomously, seeking opportunities that they may not otherwise have been aware of. Participants responded to opportunities (or lack of) with creativity in order to develop spaces according to DIY ethics. Participants shared knowledge, contacts and skills, to enable each other to 'do it themselves'. Due to the complexity of DIY ethics, participants tended to provide lists of examples of how they *do* DIY, as articulating the complex meaning of DIY is difficult (organising shows, cooking for bands, housing bands who are on tour, volunteering, and learning new skills were examples provided, amongst many more). Participants gave examples of how a DIY ethic is embedded in their everyday lives, actions, relationships and identities. The embeddedness of a DIY ethic in participants' lives supports Haenfler's (2004b) assertion that resistance is multi-layered, as in one site at one

time participants can be individually and collectively targeting micro, meso and macro level structures and inequalities. This thesis takes Haenfler's (2004b) analysis further, suggesting that DIY punk cultural production illustrates activism as multi-layered. Resistance is an important aspect of the complexly interwoven processes and tactics of DIY cultural production, but tactics beyond resistance are employed in processes of cultural production. Hence, the analysis of DIY punk cultural production in this thesis is framed within a broad and inclusive definition of activism as multi-layered and multi-scalar (to which I return later).

The processes of actualising DIY ethics were found to be complex, occurring through actions, attitudes, identities, and negotiations in multiple scales, places, and spaces. Therefore, realising DIY ethics is not just about the resistance and critique of aspects of mainstream society deemed negative. This research found that participants were prefiguratively producing culture, attempting to create the society they wished to see according to a DIY ethic (found also in the tactics autonomous activists in Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) work and in the desires of queer activists in Nicholas's (2009) work).

### **7.1.2 What does community mean in a DIY punk context and what role do community, networks and relationships play in DIY punk cultural production?**

This thesis found that, though it is a complex and contested concept, community is vital to understanding DIY punk participation and DIY cultural production and has powerful meaning to punk participants. Due to its diverse application, this research develops a definition of community that is appropriate to the field of study, drawing together literature on community and participant accounts. The analysis of community, in this unique cultural context, utilises geographical perspectives and provides an example of how movements can be not just local but also not quite transnational (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010), consistent with Massey's (1998) assertion that youth cultures are neither 'closed local cultures' nor 'undifferentiatedly global cultures'; they are both and they are somewhere in-between. The data illustrated the interconnectedness of the interwoven, multiple

sites and contexts for DIY punk community formation, interaction and production.

This thesis argues that a complex conception of imagined punk communities, which acknowledges the significance of place, is needed to understand community in a DIY punk context. Participants described international connections between punks through touring and travelling, online interactions, music and ideas, ideologies and ethics. Participants also actively nurtured belonging through the narrative construction of punk identities and communities. That is, DIY punk communities are nurtured by the participants creating and claiming labels and talking about community. They feel an imagined sense of community that is strengthened narratively. DIY culture is produced through such connections and so the existence of imagined punk communities is evidenced.

The research also found specificities of place, and the opportunities available in relation to place, were significant to community in a DIY punk context. Regular shows, with regular show-goers, nurture a sense of a local punk community, as well as a broader community. Local scene fragilities were discussed, such as the impact of venue closures on local punk communities (particularly in areas with limited venues available). Responding to fragilities can also strengthen commitment to, and sense of, community. The impact of fluctuations in place-based opportunities (such as venue options) depends on place too, as participants describe differences in scenes in bigger cities compared to smaller towns, or cities with well-established scenes compared to those with newer or fluctuating scenes. Involvement in local DIY punk scenes also interacts with participants' relationships with place. For example, some participants described belonging and pride in a place, in relation to their participation in their local DIY punk scene. So, a multi-layered and multi-scalar understanding of community is needed to articulate the complex interactions between punk scenes, ideologies and identities within, between and across boundaries of space and place.

The research thus found that DIY punk community development and interaction is multi-layered and multi-scalar. A sense of community is produced in and

through individual relationships with community, the creation of community spaces, the narrative construction of community and networks of relationships and friendships based on mutual support and trust. Then, the findings of this thesis contests O'Conner's (2008, p.3) assertion that,

*Nobody talks about "community" without putting that word in quotes. It is simply too spread out that the idea of a face-to-face community is unconvincing.*

The community theorised in this research is not wholly face-to-face, but individual interactions are fundamental to its manifestation. This thesis offers an alternative to O'Conner's cynicism. Rather than dismissing the relevance of community in a punk context, because of punk's diversity and diffuseness, this thesis asserts that the concept of community can harness the complexity of DIY punk and, both academically and for participants, can help clarify meaning and connections within DIY punk despite its diffuseness and complexity.

The findings illustrate that a sense of community is strengthened by participation in DIY punk culture. Participants create and claim labels (such as punk, feminist, anarchist, vegan, straight-edge), as well as labels used to distinguish 'non-punks' from themselves (such as 'normie' and 'muggle'), to constitute and reinforce DIY punk collective identities and sense of belonging, which works to strengthen sense of community (see 5.4). A sense of community is also created through interactions between DIY punk participants in working together to produce punk culture. The research found that a sense of community also supports and encourages participation. Collective and individual emotional experiences are key to understanding punk community. Feelings of belonging, support, and trust are developed through producing, and being part of, their community. Participants described 'belonging' as a result of collective identity, collective consciousness and collective experiences. They also described belonging as a result of feeling bounded by lack of belonging elsewhere, implying a sense of community cohesion through adversity, which participants actively nurture (for example, see the vignette is 5.1, '*All we got is each other*', which exemplifies how participants show support for each other, and express belonging, due to feeling similarly alienated by mainstream culture and society). Communities are, then,



constructed around, through and as a result of DIY cultural production.

### **7.1.3 How do participants negotiate the problematics that they encounter in their cultural production and what do these negotiations tell us about the potentialities of DIY cultural production as activism?**

The research found that participants negotiate DIY ethics on an everyday basis. Such everyday negotiations are key to the construction of prefigurative DIY cultures and communities and help to illustrate DIY punk cultural production as multi-layered and multi-scaled activism. Ethical negotiations (such as critiquing an instance of sexist behaviour) happen on a small-scale. Still they are connected to large scale structural critiques and are part of the complex patchwork of attempts to create alternatives to dominant culture through prefigurative cultural production. Participants reflexively critiqued their own attitudes and behaviours in accordance with DIY ethics at a personal level, but their critiques were connected to, and had an impact on actions and interactions within, DIY punk cultural production. The findings then support Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) assertion that everyday practices act as 'building blocks' in the creation of prefigurative cultures and communities, as participants negotiate the negative aspects of dominant culture that they wish to resist, and the ideals of a future that they hope to see.

The everyday negotiations of problematics, discussed in Chapter 6, reflect the limitations of producing an idealistic prefigurative community. Tensions are caused by disparities in attitudes, levels of commitment, and ethical and political priorities, as well as differences in tactics used for negotiating problematics. Participants were aware of the limitations of their cultural production and attempted to tackle them. There was contradiction and frustration evident with a movement, which aims to celebrate and encourage opportunities to work against, outside or beyond a system, but where, in practice, opportunity is always constrained and influenced by those systems. Tension lies in participants' desire to promote the message that they can 'do it themselves', but there were many critical factors that enabled or restricted opportunities to. For example,

participants highlighted their aims to promote shows in accordance with a DIY punk ethic, but admitted that on occasion trying to stick to these principles challenged their ability to sustain their organisation and promotion of shows.

Data analysis showed that rhetoric of authenticity was employed as an activist tactic to reinforce DIY punk ethics. This finding supports research that has identified that participants spend a significant amount of time debating what is or is not authentically punk, based on adherence to non-corporate and anti-capitalist principles (Bannister, 2007; Daschuk, 2011; Gordon, 2005; Moore, 2004; Schnitker, 2011). This research develops the findings of these studies by illustrating that participants also utilise rhetoric of authenticity to construct DIY punk in accordance with other interconnected ethics (see 4.3.2). Participants suggested that other participants 'sell-out' when they reflect attitude or behaviours that do not conform to the wider spectrum of DIY punk ethics. For example, displaying racist or sexist attitudes may be deemed 'not punk'. Participants 'call-out' such behaviours that reflect negative aspects of 'mainstream' society, and utilise rhetoric of authenticity, to narratively construct and produce DIY punk culture, according to their ethics and ideals.

In a movement that prides itself on its inclusivity and the critique and challenge of oppressive structures in dominant culture, the problematics that occur when producing DIY culture were of great concern to participants, as participants want DIY punk culture to thrive. However, tactics favoured for securing this survival varied, as did the ethical and practical priorities of participants. Rhetoric of authenticity was used to critique the actions of others and to reflexively assess participants' own behaviours, according to DIY punk ethics, and was part of the narrative construction of punk identities and communities and of developing collective consciousness. Authenticity was utilised within the DIY punk as an imagined space, with punks being held up to certain standards and expectations based on the context of that imagined space. Then, the rhetoric of authenticity helps to strengthen the coherence of a prefigurative culture, which is in many ways diffuse and unbounded.

Participant accounts of their relationships with, and experiences of, community, suggested that participants often find the work involved in DIY punk participation and cultural production emotionally rewarding. Positive experiences of contributing to the production of spaces, activities and communities, through which they felt support, trust, belonging and well-being were discussed. Feelings of pride and satisfaction from playing instruments, writing songs, performing and attending shows were also noted. However, emotions of frustration, disappointment, and anger were also revealed in participant accounts. Participants worked hard to create culture according to their desires and ethics, so difficult emotions were experienced if they felt that work was disrupted, challenged, unnoticed or seemed ineffectual. For example, bands 'selling-out' of anti-capitalist ethics, by signing to major labels, could invoke feelings of betrayal and disappointment. This was especially so when participants perceived bands as having exploited what DIY punk culture offers, using it as '*a stepping stone to get big*' (Peter). Participant experiences of exclusion and discrimination (against themselves or others) invoked feelings of alienation, discomfort, offence, disappointment, and sadness. Frustration resulted from such experiences too, as they disrupted and challenged attempts to produce spaces that were free from oppressive practices and attitudes. Frustrations also lay in experiences of oppressive practices and identity imbalances that undermined the position of DIY punk as inclusive and effectively alternative. There were also high inter-personal and emotional stakes in attempts to 'call-out' or challenge attitudes and behaviours, which participants understood as 'not DIY' or 'not punk'. The findings show that the personal and emotional were key to the ongoing negotiations that took place in the production of DIY punk culture.

The findings illustrated that burn-out, as a result of the hard and emotional work associated with DIY punk cultural production, was a concern for participants. They engaged in tactics to avoid burn-out, but the findings suggested that there is a need for greater understanding of participants' positionalities to enable assessment of when participants are burning-out, as opposed to 'dropping-out' or 'selling-out'. The findings support Brown and Pickerill's (2009) conclusion that

a felt lack of support can lead to participants growing tired of participation. A feeling of lack of support may come from experiences of discrimination (overt or more subtle), particularly when it has gone unchallenged by other participants.

Aspects of DIY punk ethical and practical negotiations exemplified strengths and weaknesses in attempts to prefiguratively produce DIY punk culture. Empowerment was offered through the freedom that DIY provides, by promoting the idea of building culture and community in participants' own image. However, uncertainty, tension and conflict arose, as differences in tactics and priorities and ideological schisms stretch and strain such 'freedoms' (Culton & Holtzman, 2010). Also, the meaning of freedom was challenged, when issues of access, opportunity and privilege were considered.

#### **7.1.4 Synthesis of findings: To what extent can attempts to realise DIY ethics through DIY punk participation be understood as activism, and what tactics are employed by participants in the creation of DIY punk culture?**

This thesis proposes that DIY punk cultural production is best framed as activism, as activism can describe actions that are more than resistant. The thesis also proposes that DIY punk cultural production helps us to better conceptualise activism. This research supports a broader more inclusive definition of activism within which the multitude of tactics for realising a DIY punk ethic, through DIY punk cultural production, is situated. DIY punk participants can be resisting large scale macro structures, while at the same time producing culture on a smaller scale that constructs prefigurative social and cultural spaces, identities, communities and actions. As shown, the spaces, identities, communities and actions at a local level also have interconnections beyond specific place. DIY punk is productive and creative, producing alternative ways of thinking, doing, and being, as well as attempting to resist aspects of 'mainstream' culture deemed negative or problematic. Participants produce alternatives to dominant culture through everyday practices and negotiations.

The synthesis of my findings reveals the ongoing, and in flux, nature of cultural production, as activism, and the work that goes into it. Participants' relationships with a DIY ethic are complex and diverse, as people have collective and individual aims and desires. Though a collective consciousness exists, it is fluid, diverse and inconsistent, as participants' priorities, commitments and experiences vary. Work goes into strengthening collective identity, consciousness and sense of community, particularly to give a sense of cohesion to a diffuse and diverse movement in which boundaries are fluid. These factors combine to support the realisation of DIY ethics through prefigurative cultural production. DIY ethics are realised through complexly interwoven tactics, which are multi-layered, multi-scalar, complex and sometimes contradictory. Conflicts, contradictions and disparities cause participants to utilise 'calling out' and the rhetoric of authenticity as activist tactics, to construct the future they wish to see, in the present (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010).

The processes of DIY punk activism are always 'messy' and 'in the making', to use Chatterton and Pickerill's, (2010) description of autonomous activism. This is, in part, due to the nebulousness of DIY punk collective consciousness and disparities in attitudes, priorities and tactics of participants in the implementation of DIY punk ethics. My findings also support Chatterton and Pickerill's (2010) argument that autonomous anti-capitalist activism is interstitial (existing between the capitalist present and a hoped-for anti-capitalist future), extending the concept to explore other aspects of DIY ethics, such as inclusivity and anti-discrimination (see 4.2.2) in the realisation of DIY punk ethics. The research advances the work of Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) by illustrating the complex connections between political and cultural activism and by emphasising the role of cultural production within autonomous activism.

## **7.2 Theoretical Implications**

This thesis contributes in several ways to a limited but growing field of study, strengthening scope for future research on DIY culture, DIY punk culture, and

punk more broadly. The focus of this research on the North East of England DIY narrows the field of study, but still the data illustrates the diversity and variety within DIY culture and highlights the complexity of cultural production, and the interconnectedness of ethics, identity, community, and activism, which happen through DIY punk in multi-layered and multi-scalar ways. Drawing together theory and lessons learned from cultural and subcultural studies, sociology and geography, this research furthers academic analysis of DIY punk. It also provides guidance on the theoretical integration of different fields of inquiry in interdisciplinary approaches to studying power, resistance and activism, as well as community, cultural production and collective identity.

Through an acknowledgement that punk precludes a definition, this thesis supports a strategy whereby punk scholars look at what activities, subjectivities, communities, and spaces are made possible *through* DIY punk, which is limited in punk scholarship (Furness, 2012; Moore, 2007; Moore & Roberts, 2009). This supports the interpretivist epistemology of the project, not seeking objective truths but gaining deeper understanding of how participants utilise a multitude of tactics in the production of punk culture. Through analysis of participant accounts and observations, I explored the subjective knowledge of those involved, and their experiences and realities, to deepen understanding of DIY punk culture and its complexity.

The research engages with several theoretical conceptualisations: resistance as multi-scalar and multi-layered, Bourdieu's concept of fields of cultural production, prefiguration, the everyday, and place. These theoretical engagements have contributed to a deeper understanding of DIY punk participation. Having critiqued definitions of activism that are narrow and focused on large-scale direct actions (2.1.2), this research illustrates how a broader more inclusive definition of activism can be applied in academic practice. DIY punk culture is representative of activism that is multi-layered, multi-scalar, and also illustrates activism as more than resistant and oppositional, it is productive. Due to the multiplicity of DIY punk ethical praxis, I assert DIY punk participation is best understood as cultural production, existing within a broader definition of activism. This study of DIY punk

then helps to develop a sharper definition of activism for use in research practice, one that recognises diversity in activism, while also supporting activism as a meaningful concept. Situating DIY punk cultural production within activism helps to overcome debates in punk scholarship that either under or over emphasise punk as resistance (Nicholas, 2005), illustrating that DIY punk resistance is complex and sometimes contradictory. The thesis therefore contributes significantly to literature on activism, particularly with relation to cultural production. Through the synthesis of inter-disciplinary approaches and the primary fieldwork, this research shows the importance of cultural production in the context of activist studies, advancing literature which seeks to better understand activism through broader definitions.

DIY punk communities have complex geographies of space, place, global connections and local specificities, which are interwoven in multi-layered and multi-scalar ways. These complex geographies illustrate the interconnections between individuals and community, how community is strengthened by participation and how community supports cultural production. My analysis recognises community as a contested concept, but also highlights the frequency with which the concept is used by participants and its significance to them, and therefore puts forward a definition of community meaningful to DIY punk based on participant accounts, which is also appropriate in an academic context. The findings support community as a useful concept in the context of DIY punk, when a definition is established that expresses community as imagined but with a sensitivity to place. The development of this definition contributes to understanding of DIY punk collectivities, identities and cultural production, as well as contributing to literature on community through a unique cultural example.

Authenticity is a concept that has been given much attention in research on punk. As this thesis does not intend to evaluate what is and is not authentically punk, my analysis illustrates how authenticity is utilised as a tactic in the creation of DIY punk culture, definitions, identities and practice. The analysis extends scholarship on authenticity and punk, by illustrating how this tactic extends beyond a

resistance to mainstream media co-option of punk and resistance of mainstream music industry practices, as tends to be the focus on scholarship on punk authenticity. Participants utilised rhetoric of authenticity to nurture attitudes and behaviours that reject oppressive social structures and to challenge oppressive behaviours, including patriarchy, sexism, racism, homophobia, heteronormativity, ableism and transphobia, as well as anti-capitalism. This thesis also illustrates the productive role of negotiations in the creation of DIY punk culture, negotiations that are often connected to conceptions of authenticity.

This research makes several further contributions in terms of methodology. Firstly, it provides guidance on how activism can be studied while using a complex and broader definition of activism. As a researcher who was both embedded in the research field as a punk participant and outside it as an academic-PhD student, the thesis also enhances debates about the 'insider/outsider' research stance, adding to scholarship that epistemologically and methodologically navigates researcher and participant subjectivities. The thesis highlights the importance of critiquing the 'insider' position and acknowledging the limitations and plausibility of 'insider' researcher, while also recognising and utilising the benefits of having pre-existing knowledge of, and relationships with, a topic and participants. Through my insider position I also developed techniques to utilise auto-ethnographic methods within a broader ethnographic approach, to acknowledge and utilise the benefits that auto-ethnography can provide, while navigating the criticisms of auto-ethnography, by combining it with other ethnographic methods. This thesis also provides guidance on ethical dilemmas that are more specific to 'insider' research with DIY activist cultures (also explored in a paper I co-authored with Downes and Breeze, 2013). Finally, this research demonstrates the use of vignettes as a tool for analysis and data presentation, as opposed to their traditional use as a data collection tool. The vignettes used in this thesis illustrate how layers of analysis can be extracted from one off events and interactions, and how short stories can be useful in drawing out themes of analysis. It is also my hope that the vignettes help to bring to life something that risks being lost in the translation of culture, which is vibrant, passionate, emotional and exciting, into the written word.



### **7.3 Recommendations for future research**

The aim of this research was to explore DIY punk participants' identifications with, and negotiations of, a DIY ethic through a multi-method ethnographic approach including participant observations and interviews. While the observational (and conversational) material gathered was substantial, interviews were carried out with only ten participants. The semi-structured interviews carried out were in depth and data collection and analysis was aided by a relatively small sample size for interviews. As generalisability was not the aim of this thesis and in-depth interview data worked to complement observational data, a small interview sample size did not hinder analysis here. However, future research may benefit from larger-scale research on the topic, with a larger sample size to develop the research findings.

Though I made an effort to capture the voices of women in my data collection (see 3.2,4), as I used purposive sampling (interviewing two female promoters to begin with) and snow-ball sampling for the interviews, based on participant roles and who participants suggested, I was not particularly strategic in my sampling of participants in terms of demographics. Future work could benefit from looking more critically at the presence or absence of people of different demographics (as identified in Chapter 6) and if/how notions of punk community are affected by demographics.

This thesis recognises the significance of the role of space in cultural production as it came through as a theme in data analysis. However, as it was not part of my initial project plan or questions, future research may benefit from further and more central engagement with the role of space in DIY punk cultural production. Such research could particularly explore how space interacts with the realisation of DIY ethics, the role space plays in the negotiations of these ethics, and how participants work with and through space in producing DIY punk culture.

The research findings highlighted the theme of participant burn-out, supporting

the work of Brown and Pickerill (2009) and Piepzna-Samarasinha (2006), though again this was not part of the original project plan. As participants selected were currently active participants in DIY cultural production, there was limited scope for discussing experiences of present or permanent burn-out. Future research could more actively engage with those who are experiencing burn-out, to the extent that they are no longer actively participating in DIY punk culture. I intend to engage further with activist discourses around selling out, to encourage the identification of when 'selling-out' or dropping out is actually burning-out and the development of strategies to reduce the risks of burning out, through increased understanding of how participants experience burn-out.

## **7.4 Reflections**

Through the ethnographic study of a DIY punk scene, in the North East of England, which combined and integrated the disciplinary approaches of sociology, cultural studies and geography, a DIY ethic has been theorised as anti-capitalist and interconnected with other complexly interwoven ideologies and politics. Findings reveal a multitude of tactics are utilised in the realisation of DIY ethics through the cultural production of DIY punk. Such cultural production is hard and emotional work. The everyday obstacles and challenges faced by participants, in attempts to realise a DIY ethic and to negotiate the interface between the community and 'mainstream' society, have been examined. Participants narratively construct DIY punk through ongoing negotiations of everyday problematics encountered through DIY punk cultural production. DIY punk culture is also produced through the ways that participants create and use (or do not use) DIY punk spaces as a result of such negotiations.

Another aspect of cultural production is the creation of collective identities and collective consciousness that strengthen cohesion in a diffuse movement. The research has considered participants' aims to create alternative communities, which support the production of alternative cultures, how DIY punk community in turn nurtures cultural production, and sheds light upon the interconnections

between individuals and community. Participants actively nurture a sense of community to strengthen DIY punk collectivity, and simultaneously a sense of community is produced through punk participation, collective consciousness and identities. This research makes an original contribution to scholarship on community, as a contested concept, by exploring the meaning of community in a unique cultural context. This helps to develop a definition of community that recognises DIY punk communities as imagined (Anderson, 1991) but remains sensitive to the significance of place. The theme of place runs throughout the findings, illustrating its significance in understanding punk ethical praxis, community and identity. The research findings then have implications for the future study of DIY culture, DIY punk, cultural production, activism, resistance, and community.

This thesis concludes that DIY punk activism involves participants using a multitude of tactics, personally and collectively, to produce culture according to complexly interwoven DIY punk ethics. DIY punk cultural production is complex, multi-layered and multi-scaled and is reliant on everyday practices and negotiations. The study illustrates the ways in which processes of DIY cultural production are activist, as participants employ a wealth of tactics, at different scales and in interconnected ways, to prefiguratively construct alternative culture, communities and identities.

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